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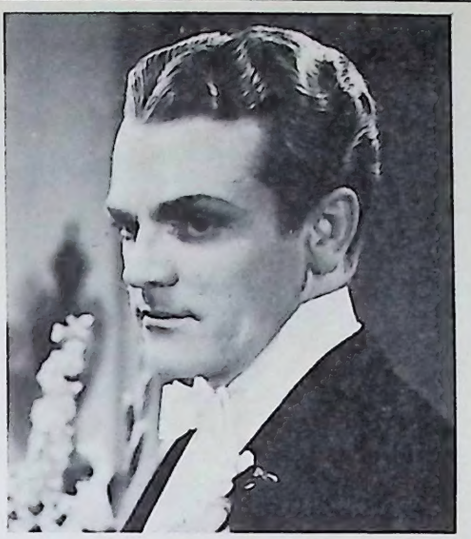

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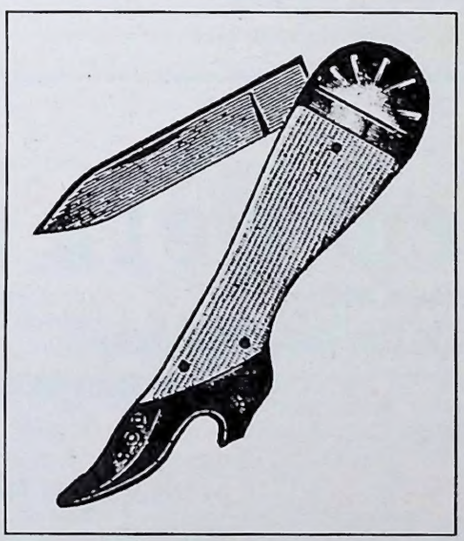

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FEEDBACK

We welcome communications from our readers, but can seldom accommodate letters over 500 words long. The editors assume that any letter received (unless otherwise stated) is free for publication.

Subtitling Jean Renoir

Mr. Aspenberg's query [Vol. 4 No. 4 "Feedback"] as to why I omitted "the small passage in which Renoir explains his fondness for *la belle époque* in the Jean Moreau section" of **Le Petit Théâtre de Jean Renoir** when I titled the film is odder than "this particular lapse" which he finds odd, since the passage he refers to is most certainly titled.

What is not titled in that sequence is the song, "Quand l'amour meurt", that Miss Moreau sings — a sad turn-of-the-century love song that I felt it was no more necessary to title than when Dietrich sang it in von Sternberg's **Morocco** some 44 years ago. No one complained that it wasn't titled then and I'm surprised that anyone complains on that score today. We're so much more sophisticated movie-wise today than we were 44 years ago, aren't we? But we are certainly more myopic.

Herman G. Weinberg
New York 10023

Female fiends found

Joe Kane's article on male chauvinist monsters [Vol. 4 No. 4] was interesting, but there was a female equivalent of Dr. Frankenstein, played by Louise Lewis in AIP's **Blood of Dracula** (though perhaps she was more of a Svengali to her experiment). Two other horror film females of prominence are Hazel Court — in **The Man Who Could Cheat Death, Dr. Blood's Coffin, The Premature Burial, The Raven,** and **Masque of the Red Death** — and Barbara Shelley, who was the monster in **The Cat Girl** and **The Gorgon,** and also featured prominently in **Blood of the Vampire, Village of the Damned, Shadow of the Cat,** and **Dracula, Prince of Darkness.**

As for less sexually-appealing female fiends, how about Martita Hunt and Freda Jackson in **Brides of Dracula**? Or Miss Jackson in **Die Monster Die?**

Then there were Martine Beswick, the monster in **Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde,** and Jacqueline Pearce, who was **The Reptile.**

The list could continue, but suffice to say female monsters did and do exist.

Could you, by the way, print the address of Mr. Kane's *Monster Times*? He's a man worth reading.

Daniel F. Phelan
Montreal

He sure is. *Monster Times*'s address is 11 West 17th Street, New York, New York 10011. — Ed.

Growing up Canadian

Robert Fothergill's article [Vol. 4 No. 3] will certainly claim its place up front in the development of a coherent view of the national culture. Sure, it's doubtful if second-hand Freud can really be of much assistance. But Fothergill's lead method is undoubtedly the right one — structural — and the same one that's already helped some of us to find "paranoid realism" in the drama.

But the synchromesh between state of affairs and all these mythic story forms — that's something else. It's not so simple, like a photograph. And even once all those loose ends of relations between art and life have been cleaned up forever, there's that other ragged intercourse called the relation between art and art. Curious, for example, how Fothergill nixes outright the notion that our standard form might have fed on the relics of British and European mode, now deadly middle-aged. How come? That's something to explore.

Crucial to draw the line between

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The Joplin Film
Fassbinder Interviewed
plus
A Pittsburgh Horror Story

"(expletive deleted)

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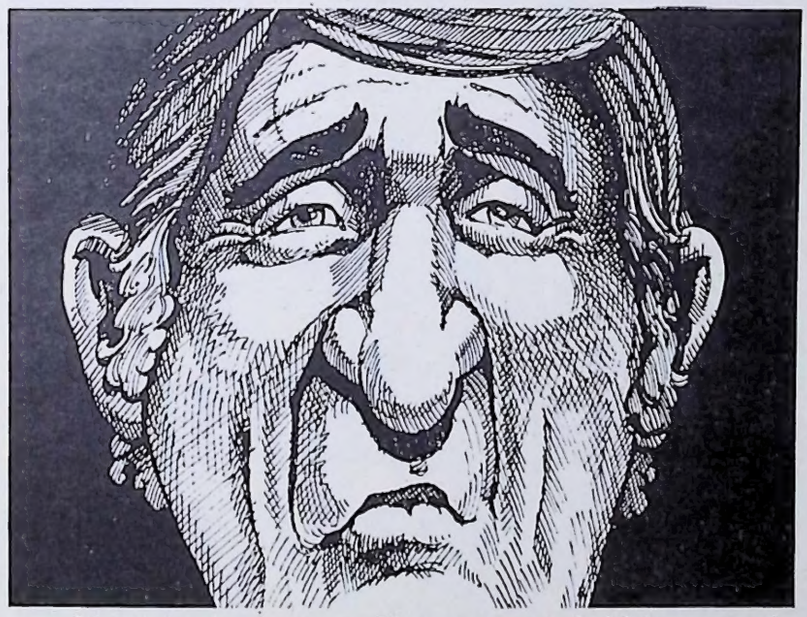

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The News Page

The truth 24 times per second.

Easter is scheduled as the release date for Ken Russell's **Tommy**, now budgeted at something over $3 million (originally slated at about $2.8 million, the picture's cost went up, first when a pier at which the film was being shot, in southern England, burnt down and another had to be built; then Ann-Margret cut her hand on the remnants of an intentionally-exploded tv set and the crew had to work around her for three days). Shooting was scheduled to be completed about mid-August. Peter Townshend has added three new songs for the film (and there may be one or two more still to come) but Russell has added no dialogue.

Ken Russell has finally confessed that he has yet to make a film in which his **five children** don't appear, at least as extras. His wife, Shirley, aside from being costume designer, gets a chance to act every now and then herself.

Toshiro Mifune has opened the first **Japanese restaurant** in Munich.

Twentieth Century-Fox has announced that, for the first time in its history, it is going to make available to outside filmmakers the **complete library of Movietonews**, containing millions of feet of news footage (all indexed and cross-referenced) shot from 1908 to the present. (Call 212-957-4986 for further information.)

Filmwomen of Boston is a brand-new organization devoted to the needs of women involved in professional filmmaking. It offers a clearinghouse for job and freelance opportunities, screening and editing facilities, workshops, and much more. Write Box 275, Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Twentieth Century-Fox has acquired distribution rights to **Phantom**, a rock music adaptation of **Phantom of the Opera** written and directed by Brian de Palma, with score and lyrics by Paul Williams. Williams stars as a rock-and-roll impresario who sells his soul to the devil in order to remain youthful-looking forever.

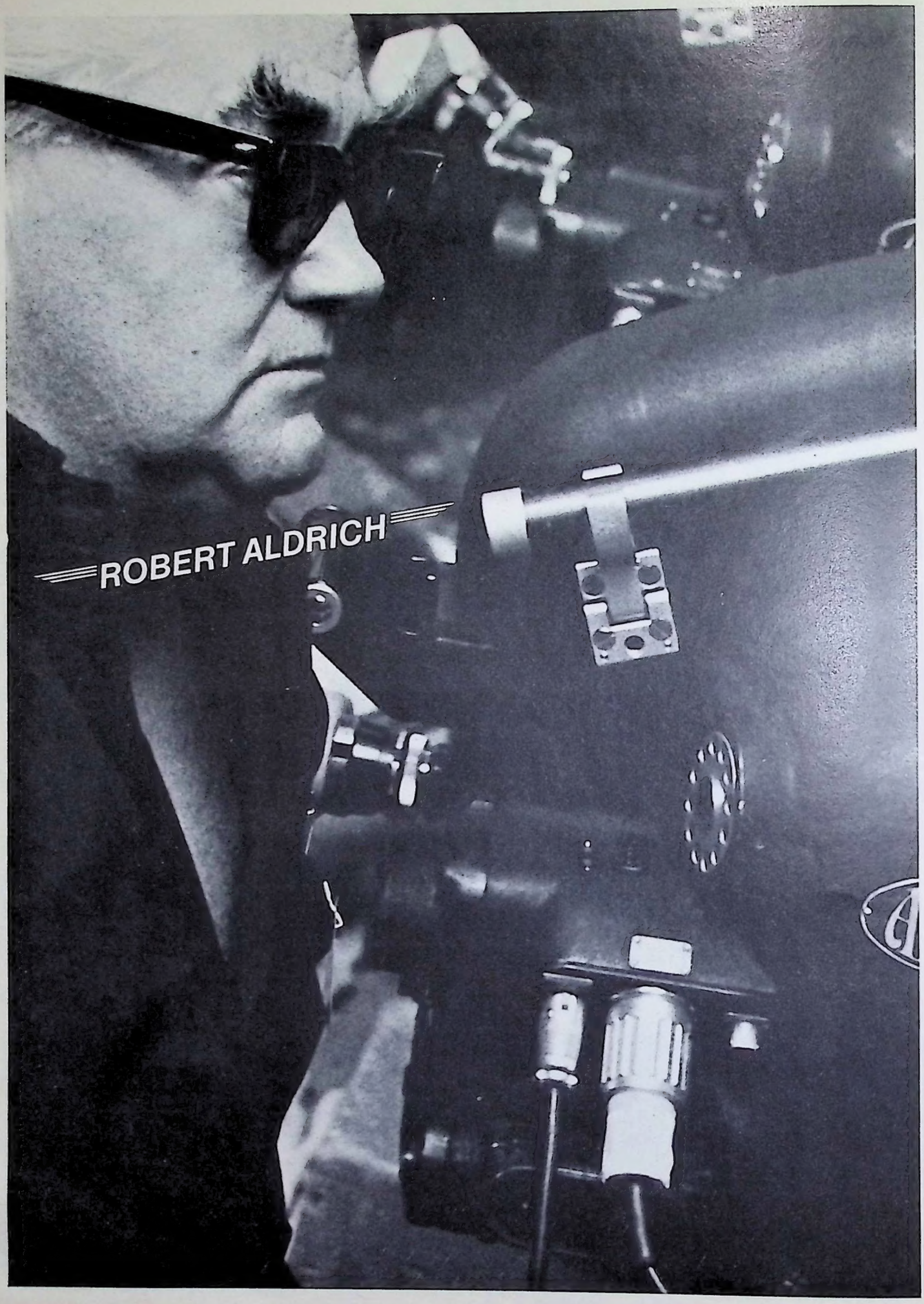
Books-to-Movies: Vancouver-based New World Productions has bought feature-film rights to Eric Ambler's **Journey Into Fear**... William Goldman, whose payment for the screenplay to **Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid** has yet to be matched, is already getting bids on his new **Marathon Man**, about a graduate student who gets innocently involved in a spy plot... And James A. Michener is awaiting bids on his new novel, **Centennial** (a story set in Colorado from the beginning of time to the present). Asking price is $1,000,000 against 10% of all gross receipts earned by the film.

Sergio Leone is reported to have successfully lured Jimmy Cagney out of retirement to play in **Once Upon a Time in America.**

John H. Livingston, formerly one of America's top barnstorming pilots, and the man who inspired Richard Bach's **Jonathan Livingston Seagull,** died at the Pompano Beach (Florida) airport June 30th, just after completing his last plane ride.

Production Notes from All Over:

Production on **Mohammed, Prophet of Allah** has now been definitely stopped, 12 weeks into a 26-week shooting schedule, as a result of Moroccan government displeasure, and there are no immediate plans to resume... John Frankenheimer has started shooting **French Connection II** (again with Gene Hackman and Fernando Rey) in Marseilles, using much of the crew he used on **Grand Prix** and **The Train**... Jean Eustache, whose **The Mother and the Whore** was a Cannes award-winner last year, is preparing **My Little Lovers**, about the conflicting instincts of adolescence, "from first communion to first kiss." ... Henry Hathaway is directing Telly Savalas in **The Praying Mantis** (by Ben Hecht) in the red light district of Copenhagen; while, among the prostitutes of Hamburg, Otto Preminger and Peter O'Toole are engaged in location shooting for **Rosebud** (O'Toole having replaced Robert Mitchum in the lead)... Lionel Stander has returned to Hollywood, for only the second time since he was blacklisted in 1949, to play George Segal's partner in **The Black Bird**. ... Norman Jewison started shooting on his **Rollerball** in Munich (at the site of the 1972 Olympic Games) at the end of July. The film stars James Caan, is set in the year 2018, and concerns the violent rollerball contests which have come to replace wars. ... The end of July was also a beginning for Peter Bogdanovich — the start of filming on his musical **At Long Last Love**, starring Burt Reynolds, Cybill Shepherd, and Madeline Kahn, and incorporating 21 Cole Porter songs. ... Burt Reynolds is also set to star in (as well as executive-produce) **City of Angels**, which is to go before the cameras (Robert Aldrich directing and producing) in November. ... Woody Allen is going to be filming something in Yugoslavia for about five months, but he won't say what it is. ... Kirk Douglas and Bruce Dern are to co-star in **Posse** (produced and directed by Douglas), to begin production October 1. ... David F. Friedman and William Allen Castleman will produce Malcolm Atterbury Jr.'s story of the life of Scott Joplin. Atterbury will also direct. ... With **Juggernaut** now scheduled to premiere October 10 (general release set for January), Richard Lester has turned to his next feature, **Capital Truegood**. (**The Four Musketeers** having been finished off with one additional day of shooting in late July.) ... The hardcover book version of Samuel Fuller's **Dead Pigeon on Beethoven Street** is a best-seller in France, and now Fuller has completed his original screenplay of **Battle Royal** and producer Al Ruddy has asked him to direct it. ... Mike Nichols has signed an agreement with Columbia Pictures to direct **The Fortune**, starring Warren Beatty and Jack Nicholson as two 1920s heels chasing a young heiress. ... Two chapters from Lillian Hellman's *Pentimento* have attracted filmmaking attention: Nicolas Roeg will direct (and Harold Pinter script) **Julia**, set in 1930s Europe; and Paramount pictures will release the film version of **Willie,** set in New Orleans. ... Nic Roeg is also said to be working on a script for a film version of Isak Dinesen's 1936 classic, **Out of Africa** (Mai Zetterling and Robert Ardrey are among those who previously tried, unsuccessfully, to film the book) ... Nat Rudich, for many years Otto Preminger's lieutenant, has announced plans to film Nancy Weber's **The Life Swap**. ... Steve Krantz, who produced **Fritz The Cat** and **Heavy Traffic**, will now do the same for an animated version of the long-running Broadway musical **Grease**. ... Alexandro Jodorowsky (**El Topo, Holy Mountain**) is scheduled to start work on his science-fiction, $8 million, epic — **Dune** — before the end of the year. ... René Clément is in Rome making a suspense film, called **Zozo and Penelope**, with Mimsy Farmer in the latter role. ... And in Belgium, Benoit Lamy, whose **Home Sweet Home** was well received at the Tehran Film Festival last year, is making a second feature, **L'Union fait la force**. ... Monte Hellman has completed shooting **Cockfighter**, starring Warren Oates. ... American International Pictures announces it has acquired distribution rights to **The Wild Party**, starring James Coco and Raquel Welch. James Ivory directed (and Ismail Merchant produced) this musical about a silent screen comedian's bizarre, extravagant party. ... Four of Anais Nin's novels — *Ladders to Fire*, *Children of the Albatross*, *The Four-Chambered Heart*, and *A Spy in the House of Love* — are being combined into one picture by a new company, HHH Rainbow Productions. ... Jeanne Moreau is writing the script for what will be her first film as director. ... But, are Elliott Gould and George Segal going to be teaming up for an assault on the Broadway stage? In a revival of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot?* To be produced and directed by Robert Altman? Watch this space.


ROBERT ALDRICH

THE DIRECTOR AS PHOENIX

Robert Aldrich laughs at insults as if they were the morning funnies. When Joan Crawford said that "he liked sick, ugly things," he replied that Joan was a dear, dear lady. When told that the *Christian Science Monitor* disapproved of his "uncomfortable woman-maligning streak", he answered even more calmly: "Sure women are a pain in the ass. But I guess they think the same thing about men."

Aldrich must not mind making people angry, either. Where **The Big Knife** simply irritated the Hollywood power structure, later films like **Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?, The Dirty Dozen**, and **The Grissom Gang** have brought down cries of "moral deviate" upon him. And if a whole film hasn't aroused critics to anger, individual scenes — like **The Killing of Sister George**'s Lesbian seduction, or **Ulzana's Raid**'s string of mutilations — have.

Yet there is a responsible side to this "Hollywood maverick," as *Variety* calls him. He began in film on the wrong side of the tracks during the McCarthy era. With his career at a critical peak, he preferred two years of exile from Hollywood to completing **The Garment Jungle** the way his box office-minded producers wanted. He has taken responsibility for his failures, in print — and spoken out, when his successes have been vilified.

Aldrich has worked around such interference, rather than against it. When **Ulzana's Raid**'s old army scout advises the younger man for whom he is working to "stop hating and start thinking," he might have been speaking to every Aldrich character who has mistaken his feelings for wisdom and suffered for it. Or better, he might have been speaking to Aldrich himself. One does not make films *about* anger, as opposed to angry ones, without first learning how not to hate.

The Leftist Influence: Crash Go the Institutions

"From Renoir... I learned the importance of authenticity and precision in the representation of setting and costumes; from William Wellman, I learned the necessity of total concentration on the production, excluding all exterior intrusions; from Milestone, I learned the art of treating actors with diplomacy. And several years later, working with Chaplin in **Limelight**, I learned how important energy and enthusiasm are for a film."

—Aldrich, discussing his seven years of assistant directing

Aldrich's early career is riddled with exposure to strong personalities: artists, in and out of film, who were well established by the time Aldrich came to be associated with them. Besides those listed above, there were Joseph Losey, Abraham Polonsky, and others incriminated in the blacklist purge at the time Aldrich broke into film. The debt his work owes them far transcends the simply technical suggested in the quote above.

By the early 1950s, the concept of "anti-hero" had been refined to so sophisticated a level that its use as a political weapon had become almost second nature in much American art — and therefore, in the films into which such popularized polemics invariably spilled. At Enterprise Studios, where Aldrich did everything but direct from 1946 to 1948, projects lived and died under the assumption that the public was ready for such system-baiting. Aldrich served as assistant director on Enterprise's biggest (and only) money-maker, Robert Rossen's **Body and Soul** (from a Polonsky script), as well as their other major critical success, Polonsky's **Force of Evil**. The "compromised hero" formula of both films — a boxer (John Garfield) refusing to throw his last big fight, and an underworld lawyer (Garfield again) turning evidence against his employers — was not new; but for the first time, Polonsky submerged both plots in an overt disdain for "Wonderland America" (**Body and Soul**'s phrase), which was to culminate three years later in his blacklisting.

By 1950, Enterprise's "Don't blame the man — blame the system" had become just as viable a commercial formula as "Head 'em off at the pass". By 1953, however, Enterprise had folded (Aldrich's explanation: too many Indians, and no chief); McCarthy had moved on from Hollywood to the Army; and Aldrich, after directing some TV, had moved on to MGM for his first feature, **The Big Leaguer**. But he did not forget the lessons he had learned at Enterprise. All of his early films set up some institution as a fundamentally corrupt framework within which his dramas take place. And instead of McCarthy, Aldrich had only to deal with Burt Lancaster's temperament on **Vera Cruz**, the Army's refusal to lend him tanks for **Attack!**, and Harry Cohn's resentment of his *roman à clef* caricature in **The Big Knife**.

Nevertheless, the shadow of McCarthy hangs over **World for Ransom** (1954) — which Aldrich considers his first personal work, and which he co-scripted with a blacklisted Hugo Butler, who received no screen credit. Mike Callaghan (Dan Duryea) is out to rescue a kidnapped scientist who holds the secret of the hydrogen bomb. Never mind that his actions might pass for patriotism; Callaghan marches to the beat of his own drum, which doesn't include letting two-bit punks get away with four-bit crimes — especially not when he gets framed. Half McCarthy caricature, half the soldier of fortune of Aldrich's *China Smith* TV series, Mike Callaghan may be quite a fifties curio today; but he also served as a blueprint for the holocaustal Mike Hammer of **Kiss Me Deadly** (1955), who doesn't "give a damn if Congress, the President, and the Supreme Court tell me to lay off. They're only men and they didn't get sapped and dumped over a

By Harry Ringel

Harry Ringel still teaches high school in Oreland, Pennsylvania.

Aldrich at work.
The Longest Yard

cliff."

To be anti-McCarthy in **Kiss Me Deadly**, Aldrich first had to come to terms with the McCarthy-like tactics of the novel's Mike Hammer: a self-appointed dispensor of justice, who terrorizes his way to the truth. In 1956, Aldrich condemned author Mickey Spillane as "an anti-democratic figure"; in 1968, after history had praised his film instead of burying it, he lightly accepted it as "the daddy of the James Bond series". But he has never praised it — possibly because Mike Hammer comes across more as an extra-hardboiled hero, than as the menacing figure Aldrich had intended. In his first *Cahiers du Cinéma* interview, Aldrich stated that he regretted having made the film: an ironic position indeed, since of all Aldrich heroes, Mike Hammer has become most prototypical for the savage, self-serving hero of today — and **Kiss Me Deadly**, as a result, has replaced **The Big Knife** on critics' lists as *the* Aldrich film to remember.

Aldrich himself seemed much more sympathetic towards the compromised Common Man that Enterprise had used — the one which set him initially towards examining the "opposition of heroes and anti-heroes, each equally deserving of our attention," which Aldrich himself has defined as one of the major themes of his work. **The Big Knife**'s Charlie Castle (Jack Palance), a movie star who must choose between his integrity and his career, may have been Clifford Odets' creation; but as a hero who must face the fact that he has ridden to success on the System's soiled coattails, he is pure Enterprise.

Odets patterned Charlie Castle after Enterprise's own John Garfield, who played the role on the stage. Antagonist Marcus Hoff (Rod Steiger), out to keep his studio in the black no matter what, blended the worst of L.B. Mayer and Harry Cohn, at whose studio **The Big Knife** was filmed. Aldrich had used this "nemesis" structure before: **Vera Cruz** (1954), his second western for Hecht-Lancaster Productions, had pitted good good guy Gary Cooper against bad good guy Burt Lancaster. But **The Big Knife** (1955) used its antagonists as distillations of philosophies, rather than as dramatically convenient types. As "a man who sold out his dreams but can't forget them," Charlie Castle was calculatedly common; as his temptor and tormentor, Hoff's money-mongering studio provided a metaphor as pointedly anti-capitalistic as the sales firm which had canned Willy Loman.

Hysteria eclipsed tragedy in **Attack!** (1956): first and strongest of Aldrich's "hate" films, which rub two antagonists together so gratingly that the audience's anger doesn't abate until one of the characters has been eliminated. **Attack!** sets up its ritual in the first reel: Lieutenant Costa (Palance again) vows, through clenched teeth, to jam a grenade down cowardly Captain Cooney's (Eddie Albert) throat, the next time he chickens out of backing up a patrol. The teeth do not unclinch until, after a series of progressively more vicious confrontations, the two lie dead, side by side, on the same stretcher.

Attack! was also Aldrich's strongest stylistic statement to date. Working, as he had in **The Big Knife**, from a James Poe script which concentrated on loosening its source's theatrics, Aldrich added epic to a play (Norman Brooks' *The Fragile Fox*) which on the Broadway stage had done everything short of shooting at its audience to involve them. The tensest scenes are either underlit, or crosslit with one harsh light; compositions are studded with obstructions: holes in walls through which battles are seen, crumpled gratings, fallen concrete blocks. Frank DeVol's score counterpoints the action throughout — from the maudlin forties music which opens the film, to the tinkling, "tisket-a-tasket" piano which underscores Cooney's breakdown. The most common two-shot assumes a dissonant edge, causing the film to look as jarring as it feels. Movies had shown us irresponsible men in responsible positions long before 1956; not so familiar were the stylistics to complement this theme.

Costa and Castle behave, until the hand of authority petting them on the head gets too clammy — at which point they stop to question their obedience, a suicidal act for both. Hoff and Cooney, of course, have no answer to give anyway, so Aldrich offers one for them. "They will not accept failure, defeat, or poverty," he told *Film Culture* in 1956, in describing such characters. "They want to be 'successful' at all costs, in business or in love, in politics or in any other sphere of their lives." Hoff's pushing costs him his star; Cooney's, coupled with an overriding father complex, costs him his life. But at least both suffer "normally" — whereas the Spartan idealism of Costa/Castle is simply, as one of **The Big Knife**'s lesser antagonists puts it, "a dream gone sour."

Dreams gone sour dominate this first, most critically successful period of Aldrich's career. His heroes may not always behave as they should; but in a society which rarely behaves as *it* should, Aldrich hardly holds them responsible. Had Western civilization not been so abusive in fulfilling its manifest destiny, there would have been no need for **Apache**'s (1954) anarchy. The same holds true for **The Big Knife**'s voracious Hollywood system, **Attack!**'s bureaucracy-ridden military complex, and ultimately, the institution of parenthood in **Autumn Leaves** (1956). To censor the memory of his father — a time-honored symbol of society — making love to his first wife, Cliff Robertson lies his way through life, including remarriage to lonely, middle-aged Joan Crawford. No

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image better sums up Aldrich's definition of the relationship of man and society throughout these first films than Robertson, screeching "I didn't do anything wrong!" as he is being dragged away to an asylum: the ultimate dream gone sour, in a society which weens its individuals on neurosis, then ignores them.

Aldrich in Europe: the First Phoenix

"Robert Aldrich will be praised as often as possible, defended each time it is necessary, and interviewed at the first opportunity."

—François Truffaut, writing for *Cahiers du Cinéma* in 1956

Aldrich attributes his being dropped as director of **The Garment Jungle** to the very fact that he *didn't* do anything wrong, but was simply trying to finish the film as it had originally been conceived. Instead, what was intended to be a **Big Knife**-type expose became, in Aldrich's words, "boy meets girl in the dress factory". Vincent Sherman finished the film, and Columbia paid Aldrich to sit out the remaining year and a half of his contract. Harry Cohn himself had done the firing — adding a final note of irony to the abruptness with which this "first phase" (1953-1957) of Aldrich's career came to an end.

Unable to find anything but script work in Hollywood, Aldrich signed to do two films in Europe, where his work had been received far more enthusiastically. **The Big Knife**, **Attack!**, and **Autumn Leaves** had all won top prizes at European film festivals. Truffaut zealously followed Aldrich around the festival beaches, to get his *Cahiers* interviews; honored and encouraged, Aldrich was eager to talk.

Unfortunately, making films in Europe was not quite so rewarding as talking about them there. In 1960, two separate articles appeared in *Cahiers du Cinéma* and *Films and Filming*, in which Aldrich himself explained why his two European films were so bad. He listed as problems the language barrier (German film crews), conflicts with his leading men (Palance and Robert Mitchum), and a front office which had cut his films more ruthlessly than any American producer would have. In subsequent interviews, Aldrich has spoken of **The Angry Hills** as a potentially good film, dragged down by the Mitchum problem; **The Phoenix** (American title: **Ten Seconds to Hell**), he insists, would have been a loser, no matter what.

But no artist hates anything worse than an aborted labor of love. Though by no means his best film, **The Phoenix** does represent Aldrich's only serious script work to that date — a factor which lends it a particularly obsessive personal feel. Perhaps, after four years of critical success and another of sitting around, "the scrupulous attention of certain French critics (which) allowed me to see the continuity which existed between this film and certain anterior themes in my work" had had time to sink in. Long on intellect but short on action, **The Phoenix** is Aldrich's most atypical film. It also stands among his most valuable: jammed full of self-consciousness, **The Phoenix** shed Aldrich's derivative fifties skin for the ineffably more personal one which was to carry him through his greatest successes in the sixties.

For the first time, Aldrich removes his characters from the center of society and re-situates them at its outskirts. Thus, **Attack!** may have offered Aldrich's first all-male group involved in a dangerous situation; but **The Phoenix** makes its six losers outsiders, as well. They are Germans; their country has ordered them to deactivate bombs which still lie amidst the rubble of post-war Berlin; and the only meaning to their existence is their "agreement" that the last survivor receive the money the others leave behind.

As the film progresses, two characters emerge, embodying both sides of the question of how best to win the tontine. Eric (Jack Palance), the "democratic ideal" (Aldrich's definition), helps his companions anyway; Karl (Jeff Chandler), the "fascist ideal," looks out for Number One. That Eric lives, while Karl dies, provides **The Phoenix** with more than just a fitting climax: the ending affirms a view of life which Eric, derided by Karl as a "poet of pain," defines for Aldrich as "a battle between the Karl's of the world and the me's of the world." No matter what environment they come from, all of Aldrich's Erics share a quiet dignity, a ferociously private code of private play, and a cautious compassion which, when won, makes them devoted as dogs. All his Karl's are bullies — to be tolerated, perhaps, but never respected. The types may be absolute; but as walking symbols of the most potent conflict in all Aldrich films, they could not be more accurate.

The Karl/Eric approach to life has even come into play behind Aldrich's camera. The he-man actors he has continually used (Marvin, Borgnine, Palance, *et al*) have all contained some Eric, or enough understanding of Eric to allow them to play a meaningful Karl. Conversely, the list of leading men Aldrich has had trouble with begins at Burt Lancaster in **Vera Cruz** (though in **Ulzana's Raid**, a mellower Lancaster fits the Eric mold perfectly), and has included Frank Sinatra, Robert Mitchum, and Kirk Douglas: personalities not known for compromising their images onscreen. Even Palance broke with Aldrich after **The Phoenix**, because Aldrich's script had de-superhumanized the novel's Eric. Palance did not mind playing Eric's bomb-defusing side; not so, the vulnérable aspect of this least violent of all Aldrich heroes.

"Each man must act, even if he is broken," Aldrich has said of his fifties heroes. With **The Phoenix**, he shows that a man more broken than Costa and Castle put together *can* act: an out-of-the-ashes view of salvation which would apply not only to Aldrich's characters, but to his own future as well.

Baby Jane and the French Kiss-Off

"He loves evil, horrendous, vile things."

— Joan Crawford

Aldrich was still working outside America when his **Phoenix** secretary sent him a novel called **Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?** Aldrich haggled over screen rights while making **Sodom and Gomorrah** for Joseph E. Levine in Italy; he began work on the script with Lukas Heller while completing **The Last Sunset** in Mexico. Pumped full of the energy which should have gone into these two films (according to Aldrich, Kirk Douglas "went berserk" when he spotted Heller's entourage on **Sunset**'s set), **Baby Jane** became Aldrich's biggest money-maker up to that point. As his successful return to Hollywood, it also marked the first time he had drawn on himself as a source: a private blending of Phoenixism and commercialism unfathomed by the second wave of French critics, who suspiciously left it alone.

The Phoenix had made outsiders of Aldrich's hero/anti-hero antagonists; **Baby Jane** carried this one step further by turning Baby Jane Hudson (Bette Davis) and her crippled sister Blanche (Joan Crawford) into out-and-out hermits, living out the rest of their broken lives amidst the ruins of their past. The film has a Hollywood setting; but no Clifford Odets grinds an axe behind it, and no Harry Cohn figure throws the action onto an ideological plane. At most, **Baby Jane**'s social criticism relates inversely to the action, as if seen through the wrong end of a telescope. Like **The Phoenix**, **Baby Jane** simply postulates a world gone bad — and focuses instead on what one small corner of that world looks like.

But where Karl and Eric represent conflicting political ideologies, **Baby Jane**'s fascism takes place on a most private level, where the only motivating forces are power and cruelty, the only purpose survival. Political polarities no longer matter; nor does the fact that Baby Jane the Abuser, tricked out of a life by her sister's deceit, becomes the most Abused. Baby Jane has tormented her sister so much that her final breakdown hardly seems tragic, as Charlie Castle's was. The conflict of hero/anti-hero gives way to one of appearance and actuality, in which definitions of good and bad serve at best as straw men: a shift out of Brecht and into de Sade for this conflict of antagonists, which has dominated much of Aldrich's work ever since.

Aldrich crosses this hall-of-mirrors moral structure with a theme he had touched on during the fifties, but which

blossomed only with **Baby Jane**: a character's childhood taking control, when he least expects it. No Aldrich film has dealt exclusively with the world of children; but many of his characters have *acted* like children, usually much to their detriment. Hoff cries when he can't get his way; Cooney curls up in a foetal position and curses his father when under pressure; Cliff Robertson, whose pathological lying in **Autumn Leaves** traces back to his father, looks to Joan Crawford as "a wife, a friend, and a mother." For all of them, childhood becomes a Pandora's box full of goblins as real as a domineering parent, or a success-mongering society — and must be kept closed, at all costs. Logically enough, in Aldrich's one proposed project dealing with children (**Kinderspiel**, never filmed), they revolt and attempt to take over the world. Judging by what adulthood promises to be in Aldrich's films, one can hardly blame them.

Baby Jane marked the first time Aldrich had placed an unsympathetic character at the center of his conflict; it was also his first work with Lukas Heller, "a terribly gifted man" with whom Aldrich was to collaborate even more closely than he had with James Poe. Just as **The Big Knife**'s social malaise has turned up in such diverse Poe scripts as **Riot!** and **They Shoot Horses, Don't They?**, the themes which Aldrich and Heller set in motion with **Baby Jane** carried them through some of their greatest successes in the sixties. **Hush Hush... Sweet Charlotte** (1964) afforded Davis and Crawford (until the latter fell ill and was replaced by Olivia de Havilland) the chance to tone down **Baby Jane**'s flamboyant cruelty into a more subdued portrayal of its predecessor's prisoner/tormentor relationship: a pattern Heller was to use again four years later, in adapting **The Killing of Sister George** for Aldrich. Drawing on **The Phoenix** and **Baby Jane**, Heller envisioned **Flight of the Phoenix**'s (1966) desert as one big sandbox for its crabby group of stranded men —much like the playground Aldrich Heller's **Dirty Dozen** (1967) made of their war games. Aldrich had portrayed men as children (**Attack!**, **Autumn Leaves**) and pariahs (**The Phoenix**) before; with Heller's assistance, these became, from **Baby Jane** on, reliable, reusable types.

Unfortunately, with auteurism just beginning to reach America in 1962, any film which (A) remotely smelled of collaboration, (B) made money, and (C) avoided politics, risked taking on a commercialist/philistine stigma. Furthermore, while the French had found ways to legitimize the western and the gangster film, horror movies remained something neither they, nor their American counterparts, could yet accept. **Psycho** had spawned a whole new subgenre, the psycho-thriller, which with its propensity for black humor, was bringing back some of the attention the horror film had not known since the Val Lewton films of the forties. At best, **Baby Jane** found acceptance on a good, ghoulish fun level; at worst, it was vilified, as by Bosley Crowther, who questioned Aldrich's "...being touted as a brilliant director in Hollywood. His achievements to date, as I see them, are a couple of second-rate freaks."

Today, one's acceptance of **Baby Jane** rides or falls with how much one respects the disturbingly common denominator the psycho-thriller has provided, in expanding its definition of "monster" to include the little old ladies next door. Like it or not, the psycho-thriller has kept the horror film alive; and where **Psycho** provided the form, **Baby Jane** supplied the semiology: a vocabulary of rag dolls, music boxes, and other symbols of lost innocence which, **Baby Jane** or no **Baby Jane**, have assumed more menacing relevance today than one might want to admit.

The Dirty Dozen and Its Dirty Director

"This is not really a joke but it's not **All Quiet** either."

— Aldrich, during the filming of **The Dirty Dozen**

Aldrich's **Baby Jane** image was quite different from the one with which he had left Hollywood five years earlier. Only one factor remained the same: his search for the one blockbuster project which would allow him to go independent. Throughout the fifties, that blockbuster was to be **Taras Bulba**, Gogol's study of the witheringly masculine codes by which the Cossacks won battles, while feeding on battles among themselves. Aldrich peddled the property for five years, before bumping heads with Yul Brynner — "...who would most certainly buy it. But that would break my heart, because I don't like Yul Brynner! But I will film **Taras Bulba** because I have to and I have to because... because... I *am* Taras Bulba!" J. Lee Thompson filmed **Taras Bulba**, with Brynner in the title role, in 1962. It lost money.

The Dirty Dozen, which Aldrich filmed for Kenneth Tynan and MGM in 1967, didn't; the twenty million dollars the film has pulled in to date have placed it among the top fifty grossing films of all time. Aldrich's "biggest" film, it has also been his most controversial, gaining that special brand of attention reserved for bombshells. Despite Bosley Crowther's accusation that the film encouraged "a spirit of hooliganism which is brazenly anti-social, to say the least," **The Dirty Dozen** managed to hit an awful lot of people right where they lived. Why?

The Dirty Dozen was *not* **All Quiet on the Western Front**: nor did it have to be, except within an absolutist critical context which, by the sixties, treated any film not patently anti-war as an atavism, or a joke. What it was, was **Attack**: only depoliticized, and repackaged to sell the anti-authoritarianism to a broader audience. In fact, **The Dirty Dozen** picks up right where **Attack**'s final image — hero Costa's face frozen in a coward's grimace, lying next to coward Cooney's, which smiles a hero's peace — leaves off. But instead of one Captain Cooney, **The Dirty Dozen** gives us an army full of them: a world in which power-hungry, mongoloid-minded military chiefs are the rule.

Unlike **Attack**, however, **The Dirty Dozen** does not shake its fist at the hell-on-earth which has put lions at the bottom of a Chain of Being ruled by donkeys. From the beginning, the dirty dozen — twelve military criminals harshly condemned for what the movie defines as "I didn't mean to do it" sins — and their black-sheep leader (Lee Marvin) seem used to this fact; so the officer-baiting serves mainly as a device to push the audience into the criminals' corner. This accomplished, Aldrich turns what could have been a facile protest film into a profound study of human relations, designed first and foremost to carry its audience along with it. **Attack**'s hatred of the System did not let up until Cooney lay dead on a stretcher; by using **Attack**'s fiercely anti-authoritarian message as dramatic expedience, **The Dirty Dozen** put this same theme in its back pocket.

But human relations are no easy thing to translate to the screen; and if **The Dirty Dozen** succeeded in moving people "more by magic than logic," as Andrew Sarris says, it did so by valuing the characters themselves above their relationship to society. Two-thirds of the film traces what happens inside and among the criminals as they prepare for the redemption by suicide Society has afforded them: to wipe out a castle full of vacationing Nazi officers and their women. The final third, as Aldrich himself says, "was a pretty high-class, well-done war adventure." At least two-thirds of **The Dirty Dozen**'s heart, then, lies closer to **To Sir With Love** — with Marvin as Sir, winning over his drop-out pupils through his "I'm one of you though I'll never admit it" approach to education — than to **Battle of the Bulge**. As the final step in the dirty dozen's "re-education," the castle serves much the same purpose as a Skinner Box. And even if Marvin's crash course in human dignity was a bit unorthodox, a lot of people must have been willing to come to class.

Movies like this do not clean up by pandering to the nation's sensationalistic side. Instead, **The Dirty Dozen** appeals to the loser/outsider in all of us —a most private, and therefore more universal attitude, towards which Aldrich had been moving ever since **The Phoenix** had shifted his we're-not-responsible-for-what-we-do fifties heroes out of any political spectrum. This is where the money was in 1967 — Bonnie and Clyde being "redeemed" in much the same way by their bank robbing — and not in the

perfunctory subversion critics assumed ruled **The Dirty Dozen**. **The Dirty Dozen** did not spring whole out of the diseased side of a nation's psyche. Aldrich himself had planted many of the seeds with his highly-praised fifties work; now, many of those same critics were looking to chop down a plant they themselves had watered.

At this point in his career, Aldrich could not have cared less. **The Dirty Dozen** allowed him to realize his dream — the purchase of the old Mary Pickford studios in East Hollywood, which he promptly christened the Aldrich Studios. But "Taras Bulba" did not plan to turn his back on the system he had been fighting for fifteen years, so much as he hoped to beat it at its own game. At the time, Aldrich prophetically pronounced the studio system dead — and his small independent outfit, the only way to outlast it. The full-screen credit "Filmed at the Aldrich Studios" which opens his first independent film, **The Killing of Sister George**, comes across not so much as an announcement, as a cry of victory.

The Xilling of Xister George

Mrs. Mercy Croft (Coral Browne), carrying an armful of Childie's (Susannah York) dolls, stops near the doorway.

MERCY: What shall we do with these?

CHILDIE: Oh, dump them on the bed.

Childie reaches out to help, the dolls spill in confusion all over the bed. Childie throws herself down and snuggles in amongst the dolls.

CHILDIE: Oh, Emmeline, haven't you got a clumsy Mummy.

MERCY: I don't know, she seems very happy.

She bends down as Childie smiles up at her and moments later they are both on the bed, straining against each other in a totally abandoned embrace.

— Scene 176, from Lukas Heller's **Killing of Sister George** script

The question of whether **The Dirty Dozen** had explored or exploited the politics of violence had divided critical opinion down the middle; by buying Frank Marcus' play **The Killing of Sister George** (with Bette Davis originally slated for the Lesbian lead), Aldrich was about to do the same thing with sex. But instead of encountering Bosley Crowther at sword's point, Aldrich faced the newly installed GMRX rating system, for which **Sister George** became the first X-rated test case.

What put **Sister George** in this notorious position was not its subject matter; indeed, like homosexuality, Lesbianism was having relatively little trouble reaching the screen in the late 1960s, as long as it was "tastefully" presented (examples: **The Fox**, **Les Biches**). After **The Dirty Dozen**, however, most critics freely admitted that, right or wrong, innuendo was not Aldrich's forté. In the play, Mercy stroking Childie's hair had served as the sign of seduction. In the film, Aldrich turned Heller's projected "abandoned embrace" into an extended exercise in breast-fondling, filmed (without rehearsal) in one long underlit take. Aldrich hoped, by positioning The Scene after most of the film's two hours plus of **Baby Jane**-type laceration had occurred, "to bring off the most erotic, provocative English-language sex scene that anyone has photographed." Andrew Sarris, among other male critics, openly admitted he had come close to succeeding; Renata Adler, faithfully upholding the "trash" side of the argument for *The New York Times*, christened The Scene "the longest most unerotic, cash-conscious scene between a person and a breast there has ever been on the screen."

All superlatives aside, the fact remains that no one sequence has so dominated any other Aldrich film: no mean trick, in a career which has included a man's arm being crushed by a tank (**Attack!**), the Bomb going off in a woman's face (**Kiss Me Deadly**), and the destruction of **Sodom and Gomorrah**. Nevertheless, The Scene does strike a consistent note in terms of Aldrich's other films — many of which have pivoted upon one scene in which a main character's identity gives in totally to a darker, terribly unexpected side of his or her nature. In Aldrich's earlier films, the bugbear was regression: Cooney hugging his slippers, Cliff Robertson pouting a pre-**Charly** slur in **Autumn Leaves**, Baby Jane finally consumed by the shadow of her childhood. Even Maggott (Telly Savalas), the one member of the **Dirty Dozen** with an "insight into women" (he destroys them) gives in to his primitive impulse in the middle of the climactic attack: proving that this most subtle Death Wish can be built into groups, as well.

With Maggott, however, repression replaced regression as the negative epiphanal force; so that by the time Childie's orgasm sneaks up on her, Aldrich had fully defined "the relationship, in sodomite terms, between pain and ecstasy" which he had first verbalized while working on **Sodom and Gomorrah**. Like her antecedents, Childie gives in to her senses only under the most painful, shame-inducing conditions. (Only Barbara Blandish, whose surprise orgasm crystallizes her love for Slim Grissom in **The Grissom Gang** (1971) benefits at all from the experience — "benefit" being a kind word, since she is watching Slim stab his brother to death when she climaxes.)

No director of "he-man" pictures has defined the antithesis of his male-to-male world more strongly. Aldrich himself states: "I suppose all-consuming love has never been a part of my work. It is the basis of a man's life and adjustment, but it usually smothers him,

Marvin, Borgnine.
Emperor of the North

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and his feeling for a way of life or a cause can be more passionate and lasting than that for a woman." In his films, Aldrich puts his position more bluntly: if a female isn't a Lesbian or Superwoman, she isn't worth considering at all.

Aldrich had touched on the subject of Lesbianism several times. **World for Ransom** originally opened with a reverse dolly shot, which reveals that the film's female lead is kissing another woman. The scene was cut, as were the Lesbian encounters in **Sodom and Gomorrah**. **The Legend of Lylah Clare**'s parade of husky-voiced dragon ladies find more warmth among themselves than with their men; and **Sister George** brings to the surface the infertile aggression/submission pattern which underlay both **Baby Jane** and **Sweet Charlotte**.

On the other hand, Aldrich females stand to rise above their unfavorable roles only by being superwomen (Crawford's woman/over/protector friend in **Autumn Leaves**); legends, tried if not true (**The Legend of Lylah Clare**); or the sort of wet dream a man stranded in the desert might manufacture (Ernest Borgnine's vision of Barrie Chase belly dancing in **Flight of the Phoenix**). But like mirages, these visions are suspect, as **Lylah Clare** — Aldrich's most pointed examination of the rot which lies beneath that most glossy of all institutions, the American feminine ideal — shows. The energy which goes into the creation of the Dietrich/Harlow/Monroe legend of German-born screen actress Lylah Clare involves covering up her bordello past, her only too varied affairs, and the scandal which leads to her death. Not one to give up, her director-husband immediately begins to hunt for *the* girl to play Lylah in a film he has written of her life story. His search stops at Elsa Brinkman (Kim Novak plays both roles) — with predictably repetitive results.

Although this ambitious blending of **Svengali**, **Eight-and-a-Half**, **Vertigo**, and **The Big Knife** never does quite jell, it has become Aldrich's most prototypical "cult" film — largely because of the atmosphere of Hollywood *normality* he injects into these most unlikely proceedings. The director (Peter Finch) knows what the truth about his wife was; yet he films her legend anyway. Those around him cooperate as if they were pushing a new brand of dog food; and from what we know about the cut-throat Hollywood system from movies like **The Big Knife**, a certain regularity *must* exist in this most irregular myth-making process.

Furthermore, losing one's humanity seems to be a normal function of the process — whether the victim is a director immersing himself in the fantasy of what his life's great tragedy should have been, or an Elsa Brinkman giving in to the same fantasy because she loves him. In the end, nobody wins — except the all-consuming public. **The Legend of Lylah Clare** ends with the Hollywood premier of **The Legend of Lylah Clare**: interviews, paeans to the dear departed Elsa, and finally a dog food commercial. The "magic" is dumped into a bowl; a pack of hungry dogs fly at the bowl, their good-natured haste turning nasty just before the commercial is over; and the film ends with a freeze-frame snarl. Hollywood has done much the same thing, **Lylah Clare** seems to say: there would be no beauty to package, were the packaging process itself not so ugly.

Still, Aldrich does seem to prefer — however understatedly — the European female's image over that of her American counterpart. Lylah Clare *had* to be a European legend, if only because her sexuality was more genuine — just as an American girl, little Elsa Brinkman from upstate Vermont, seemed destined as much by her culture as by her personality to give herself over piece by piece to the role, her weak-willed demands to be loved for herself notwithstanding. **The Phoenix**'s young German widow (Martine Carol) asks Eric for the same thing. "Sometimes when I look at you it's enough," he replies: a final word on the man/woman relationship in Aldrich films, if there ever was one.

By going in so strongly for the big-breast approach to sexuality, Aldrich's American females seem only too willing to comply with this definition — even if, like Elsa Brinkman, they don't know quite so well as their European counterparts what they are letting themselves in for. If Aldrich mocks Baby Jane as much as he pities her, it is because his awareness of just how grossly she has missed fitting the mold of the American Dream Woman is built right into the fabric of the film. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Aldrich's one attempt to employ the sex bomb formula — **Four for Texas**, with Anita Ekberg and Ursula Andress — also resulted in his dullest film; or that Aldrich's own wife is German.

Aldrich's black-and-white portrait of womanhood is no mere Victorian hangover, the madonna-prostitute complex conveniently translated to the screen. His sensitivity to women led him to sprinkle **Kiss Me Deadly** with small-breasted actresses, during a big-breasted era; to work harmoniously with such legendary Hollywood enemies as Bette Davis and Joan Crawford; and to distinguish freely between a Jayne Mansfield ("a fabricated image, foisted on the public") and a Brigitte Bardot ("one of those sex symbols who comes along, every ten years or so, to save the cinema"). "Women obey better but are more emotional and far more unpredictable," Aldrich has stated, in comparing the male actors he has worked with to the females: a mutely sympathetic attitude which has not compromised his ability to use actresses — even if it has compromised the characters they play.

If love doesn't work in Aldrich films, nothing much else does either. Few careers boast so many unhappy endings, or endings the director would have preferred to leave unhappy (**Apache** and **Attack!**, in particular). Aldrich the anti-Romanticist fits so snugly into one corner of Aldrich the Fatalist that one hardly need use the term "Romance" at all. When Sister George, desperately alone at the end of the film, accepts her future as Clarabelle the Cow, she moos in good company.

The High Price of Independence

"We devised a better mousetrap, but there weren't any more mice."

— Aldrich, on the failure of his independent studio

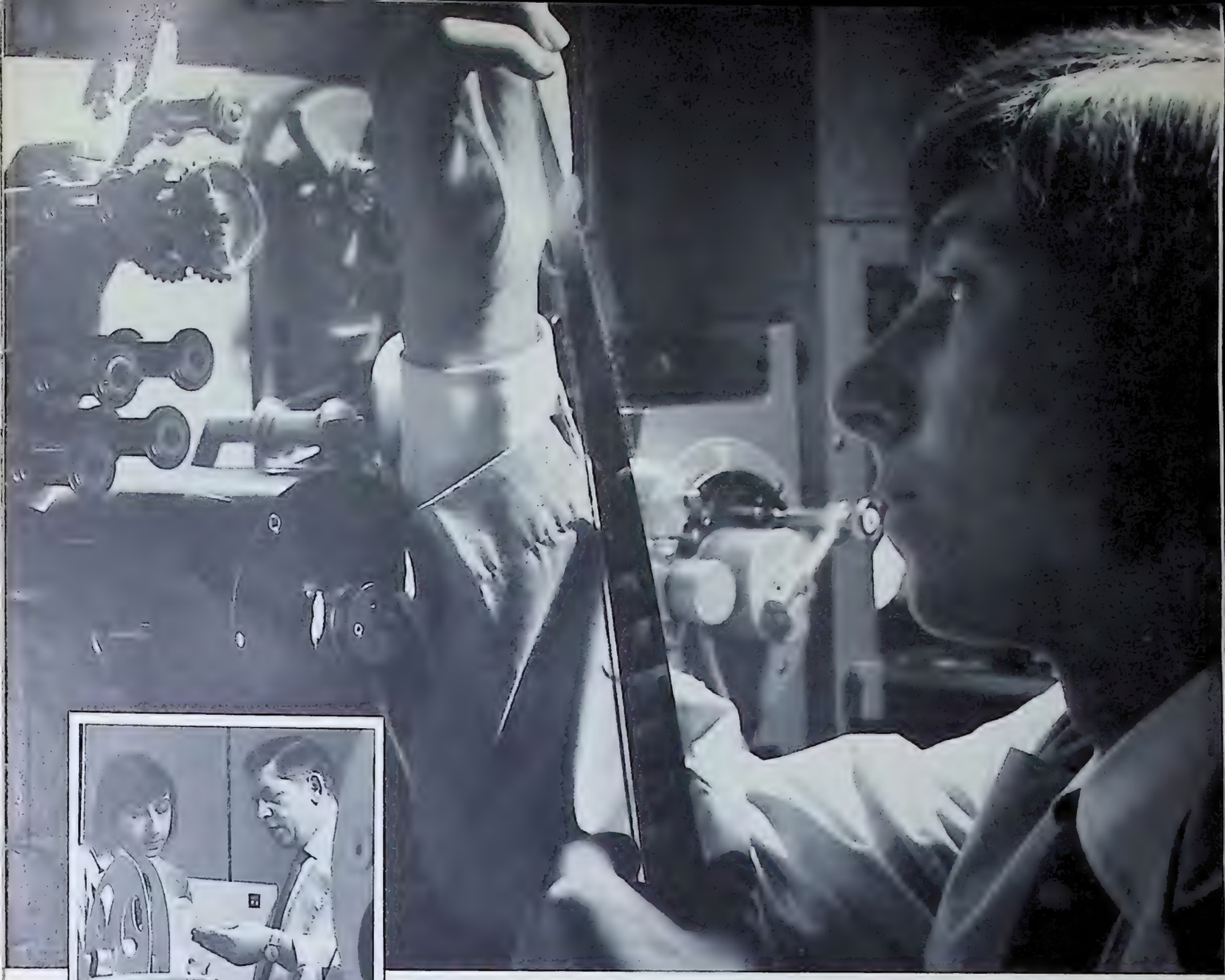
The Killing of Sister George was Aldrich's first project at his own studio. It is the only Aldrich Studios film which stands a chance of finishing in the black.

In 1969, ABC asked Aldrich for another **Dirty Dozen**. He gave them **Too Late the Hero**, a script he had written in 1959. A product of Aldrich's "intellectual" **Phoenix** period, **Too Late the Hero** offered his most detached study of the mechanics of heroism. A platoon, behind enemy lines because of the "into the valley of death rode the 400" mentality of their captain, finds itself stranded when the captain is killed. Only two (Cliff Robertson and Michael Caine) make it back anywhere near their own camp; only one survives the final run across an open field to safety.

Longer on ideas than action, **Too Late the Hero** devoted even more attention to the random process by which heroes are made than **Attack** and **The Dirty Dozen** had — and became one of the hugest flops in ABC's history. Aldrich blamed Kent State for spoiling the country's receptivity to such a film; more possibly, he simply ran up against a market as unwilling to listen to a **Dirty Dozen** sermon, as it had been eager to see that sermon enacted.

The Grissom Gang (1971) fared little better — surprising indeed, for this story of a slavering, pea-brained killer who falls in love with the society girl his gangster family kidnaps was right up Aldrich's **Dirty Dozen/Baby Jane** alley. Furthermore, the original novel, James Hadley Chase's *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, had stirred World War II England to rage for, in George Orwell's words, "taking for granted the most complete corruption and self-seeking as the norm of human behaviour." Between this and the thirties nostalgia, what could have been better box office in 1971?

Aldrich's plot modifications seemed to ignore box office altogether. First off, he injected Chase's ferocious Slim Grissom with a dose of Dirty Dozen innocence — leaving him deadly with a knife, but more prone to talk about mama's cookies than the last blade he had planted in a victim's back. Furthermore, Aldrich not only built the love-



Bill Hambley and Colin Davis discuss fresh ideas for improved print quality.

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hate relationship between Slim and Barbara Blandish completely from scratch, but he placed this most private conflict at the center of his film. Chase leaves us to guess at the horrible things taking place in the attic where Miss Blandish is being held prisoner. Aldrich sets half his film up there — and allows Miss Blandish to get in enough licks to make us question who is imprisoning whom.

Even before its release, Aldrich termed **The Grissom Gang** "a personal story... not a commercially oriented picture." That he was right did not keep Sarris from praising it as "one of the most unexpectedly lyrical love stories of the year" — nor *Variety* from berating it as a "morally reprehensible" film. The truth lay not so much between these definitions, as above them: in the power struggle going on in Slim's attic, not on the film's blood-spattered streets.

The Phoenix was rising again — alone perhaps, but with so much added strength and wisdom that his last two films, **Ulzana's Raid** (1972) and **Emperor of the North** (1973), have attracted more critical praise than most other Aldrich films put together. **Ulzana's Raid** would be **Apache** all over again, were Aldrich not more concerned with analyzing the true nature of the conflict he presents than with choosing sides. Pushed into a corner by the white man, an Indian war party strikes and runs, mutilating their victims as they go, until a cavalry troop is sent to subdue them. The political persecution may be **Apache**'s, but the private rites of cruelty come straight from **Baby Jane**: the more difficult a time a man has dying, Ulzana's tribe believes, the more power he gives up to his tormentor. Furthermore, the white man's victory is more inevitable than improper in Aldrich's New World where the only usable answer to why people do such terrible things is that this is "how they are."

Ulzana's Raid ages the Adult Western into wisdom, not senility. Perhaps the most "Eastern" Western ever made, the film deals with the *process* by which separate wisdoms couple and either mate or sting each other to death, not with the more obvious manifestations of that confrontation. And perhaps no film has reflected so clinically how the surviving wisdom is preserved and transmitted. **Ulzana's Raid**'s thin-skinned young lieutenant (Bruce Davison) wants to stick to civilization's rules, no matter what — even when doing so costs him the lives of his own men. Antithetically, Aldrich's trading in his hate badge for a thinking cap allows him to conclude, through grizzled old scout Burt Lancaster, that a dried piece of horse manure just might matter more than a Christian burial. We may never rid ourselves of inept army captains or philistine film producers; but we might be able to coexist *and* save our dignity, **Ulzana's Raid** shows us, if we can learn to out-think them.

Like **Ulzana's Raid**, **Emperor of the North** draws on Aldrich's past career as much as it redefines it. The ritual of a primitive force (hobos riding trains) pitted against a civilizing one (the conductors, "dedicated to their destruction") is as basic as **Attack!**'s; the image of outsiders struggling like ants in the ruins of their own ant hill dates back to **The Phoenix**. But Aldrich's new freedom of reflecting sides, rather than taking them, lends the film fresh spiritual autonomy — and elevates it from the level of moral parable to one of tall tale, bordering on myth.

The difference lies in Shack (Ernest Borgnine): the bullying, hammer-heaving brute of a conductor, whose legend grows every time he bounces another 'bo off the North Pole's rails. Shack could have been just another king-of-the-hill Aldrich villain; but Aldrich insists that his audience respect Shack, just as he had asked them to forgive **Ulzana's Raid**'s inexperienced lieutenant. "Shack might be a good father, or a nice guy, or a great fellow around the beer hall," Aldrich explains; "but he had total integrity towards his corruption. Therefore, the Marvin character has extraordinary respect for him — in the arena. That's why neither kills the other, when he has the chance. And that's why there is almost no applause when Borgnine gets thrown off the train." The "fight of the century" (as the ads say) between Shack and A-Number-One (Lee Marvin) does indeed run deeper than simply who stays down for the count. "In the process of growing older," Aldrich concludes, "you sadly realize that there just might be two sides to a question."

Two sides or not, **Emperor**'s twentieth century world is more immutable than the Old West ever was. Morally, only the little things matter. Ulzana possessed his own code of potency which had to be preserved, even in defeat. Similarly, to throw a man off a moving train is one thing; to laugh at him while he is rubbing smoke from his eyes, quite another. Little things add up, **Emperor of the North** tells us. And the shadow they cast, when men are left to mythologize them, can make them downright awesome.

Unfortunately, while Aldrich and the critics have been off on their second honeymoon, the money has run a little low. Recently, Aldrich sold his studio and returned to directing for major companies; to compound matters, Warners dropped him as director of **Yakuza**, because Robert Mitchum refused to work with him. They would have dropped Mitchum, Aldrich insists, had **Emperor** turned more sizeable gains during its first run around the country.

Today, Aldrich finds himself in much the same position as after the **Garment Jungle** fiasco. Now, as then, his films are beginning to find widespread critical acceptance; he is also coming off a string of intensely personal films all the more striking because they satisfy the broad demands of genre as well. As in 1957, however, Aldrich finds himself in the familiar position of having to play leapfrog with his audience's tastes. Six years ago, **The Dirty Dozen** turned the trick for him; this time around, **The Longest Yard** (scheduled for October, 1974, release) stands to do the same thing. A reworking of **The Dirty Dozen** in a prison setting, **The Longest Yard** casts Burt Reynolds as a jailed pro football player who faces the perpetual wrath of psychotic warden Eddie Albert. Instead of a castle full of Nazi officers, however, **The Longest Yard** offers a climactic football game between Albert's pet semi-pro team of prison guards, and the group of drop-outs Reynolds molds into a thinking, feeling group. From the anti-authoritarianism to the outsiders, the themes are all there — as they were ten years ago, when Aldrich came up with **Baby Jane**. But if Aldrich doesn't come up with something more than a simple reworking of the usual themes, it will be one of the few exceptions in a career which has thrived on surprise.

Regardless of what **The Longest Yard** delivers, Aldrich's offices are at Paramount now. Perhaps the highest price of independence is that it doesn't pay by the hour.

For an artist steeped in the subject matter of the West, Robert Aldrich's work displays a remarkable affinity for the ways of the East. More and more, his films have moved away from the psychologizing inherent in Occidental art, and towards the ritual patterns which most "Eastern Western" thought, from Artaud's Theater of Cruelty to the theories of Jung, have discovered as a short cut to catharsis. Aldrich's delineation of character has given way to the subsuming of personality in situations: a streamlining effect which distills myth out of conflict, and lends those personalities involved the weight of archetype. The most recent Aldrich films contain no heroes or villains — at least, not as personifications of good and evil. Instead, lifestyles struggle to coexist; and where Aldrich once would have used the medium to condemn the more ruthless culture, he is now more interested in *why* one must invariably survive at the expense of the other.

This balance has not come easy. When, at the end of **Emperor of the North**, A-Number-One throws his opportunistic protégée off the train they have won from Shack, he is unloading every compromise Robert Aldrich has faced in twenty years of hard-nosed combat with the Hollywood system. "You had the juice, kid — but not the heart!" A-Number-One yells, before his train disappears around the bend. Similarly, plenty of directors have had the juice. Precious few have had the heart.

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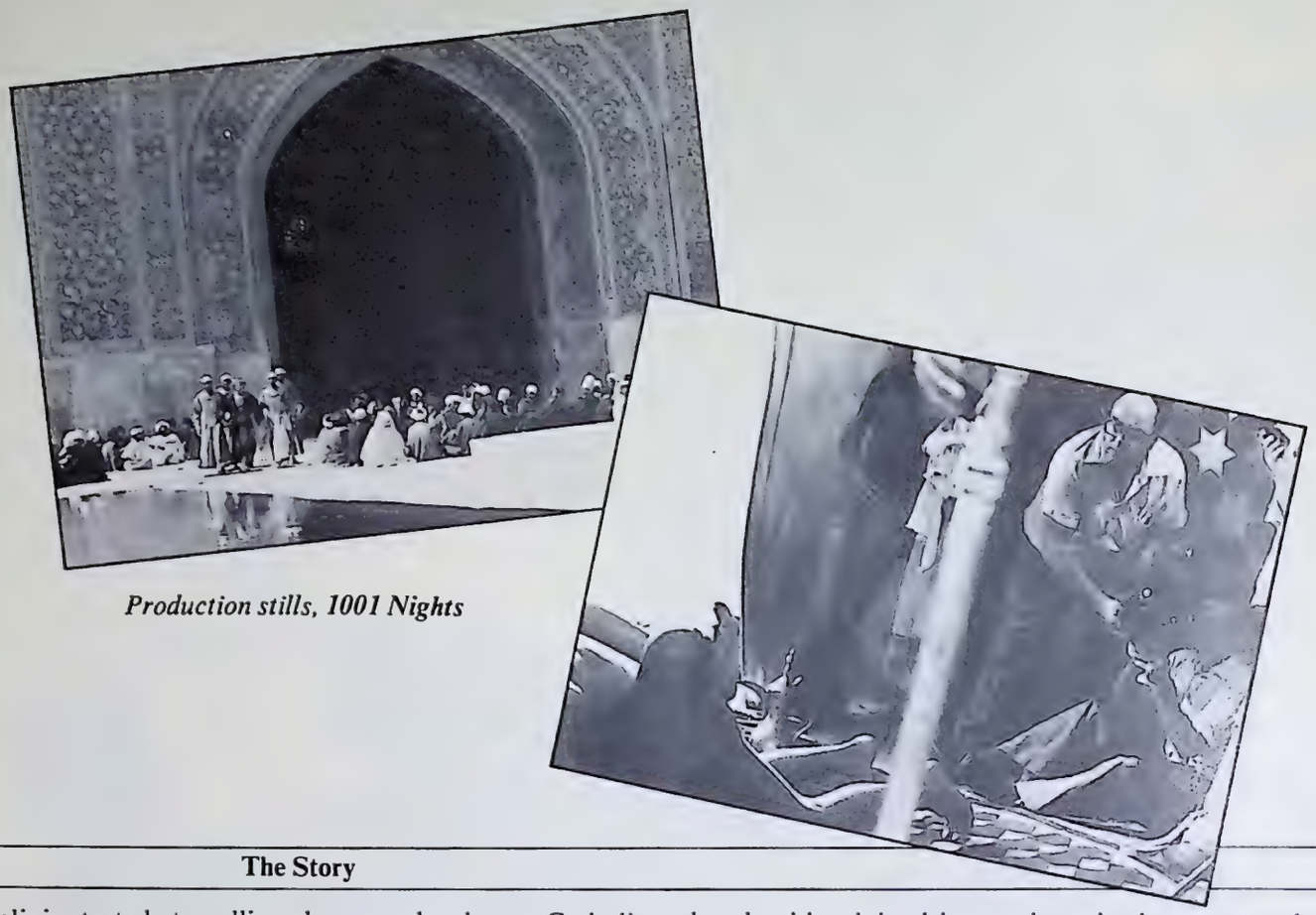


Production stills, 1001 Nights

The Story

Pasolini started travelling because he hates Catholic holidays in Rome. Christmas in the Libyan desert, Easter trips to North Africa and Saudi Arabia. Finally he began to shoot abroad: **Oedipus Rex** in Morocco, **Medea** in Turkey, and **Canterbury Tales** where Chaucer had placed it. He may not be escaping Catholicism, but he is escaping its geographical orbit: for his latest film, **1001 Nights**, he went to Ethiopia, Eritrea, Yemen, Persia, India and Nepal.

The feeling of a man escaping his roots is born out by the first impressions on the set in Iran: behind his camera, which he operates himself, Pasolini seems a man in a hurry, fraught by restrictions of time and space. He works fast, with great precision, sure of himself. If a set-up is too complicated, he will choose another; if a crew member is clumsy, he will patiently replace him, doing the job, more often than not, himself. Where other directors will manage ten important shots a day, Pasolini will manage 40. Because the shots seem to be there, ready, in his head, and putting them on celluloid is just a necessary, technical, obstacle between his imagination and the viewer. He seems to want to get it over with, free himself of his mind's image, of his obsession; spew it out as fast as possible. Two cameras are constantly ready: simple 35mm Arriflexes without sound and without blimps, one loading while he shoots with the other. Sound is too cumbersome and time-consuming; he will create it later, in the studio, with the help of a few fragments recorded on location. The director of photography only measures the light intensity, the camera operator hands Pasolini the lenses he asks for. The shots are set up by the director himself, decor details are decided or adjusted by him directly, the actors placed, with minimal instructions, in the scene at the last moment. One feels strongly that if he could make the film entirely alone, Pasolini would do it. The technique he uses, in fact, is cinematically simplistic. There is nothing fancy except the costumes and the landscape; the first have cost him, on this film alone, 500 million Italian Lire, more than a third of the film's cost, while the latter has been there for centuries, except that nobody ever thought of using it in a film.

In the incredible courtyard of the Mesjed-esh-Shah in Isfahan I watch him moving the masses of locally-recruited extras about, incredible faces, all colors from brown to black, turbaned and betogaed, clothed in silk and brocade. The Mosque, built in 1706 by the last of the Safavids, cost less than the film now made in it, but it is one of the most famous and fantastic of the buildings of Islam. It is a wedding scene Pasolini has set here, a tired donkey bedecked with precious cloth, a few dancers in the middle of a princely repast taken on the floor, a staid-looking couple: the bride is, in reality, the precocious 13-year-old son of the owner of a nearby hotel, the one where Pasolini is staying, and speaks, miraculously, Italian, although, like all other actors in the film, he(she) speaks no lines during the shooting. From close by, it's all brass foil and vineyard lumber, steel tubular scaffolding and unsewn cloth, but through the camera's eye it's the splendor of the court of Haroun el Rashid. Pasolini has done his research well: the sense of authenticity is there, despite the fable and the fantasy. The immense mosque is real, the reflecting surface of the central pool is real, and the faces are real. And the time element, the rhythm of the epoch, the only item that could trip him up, is masterly believable.

Obviously, Pasolini is creating a film style which we would find hard to call realistic, but which in effect represents a historical variant of realism. That is why he

By Gideon Bachmann

Gideon Bachmann is currently preparing a feature film to be shot in Israel.

seeks locations that are not studio-built and faces that seem to be of the period he treats. The exterior aspect becomes more important than the content the actor or decor is meant to carry, and thus they become, in themselves, content. As he says, he prefers to have nothing that pretends to be something it is not, and that appears to be one of the reasons he has lost his faith in obtaining political effects through the cinema: the political film, he claims, is like a ball incestuously thrown back and forth between creator and audience, each playing at conviction.

In conversation, he readily voices disappointment with those of his critics who seem to have failed to understand his new approach, and who seem to lament his "lost decisiveness". He feels somewhat betrayed by his friends of the left, who do not recognize the kind of "physiognomy-realism" he has attempted to create in his last three films, which he calls his "trilogy of life" — **Decameron, Canterbury Tales** and **1001 Nights.** More than the direct social action he tried creating in his early work, he feels these will penetrate to a much wider audience and make, finally, a more incisive inroad on the mind. A calculation which, in terms of the sheer number of viewers, has certainly been proven by fact.

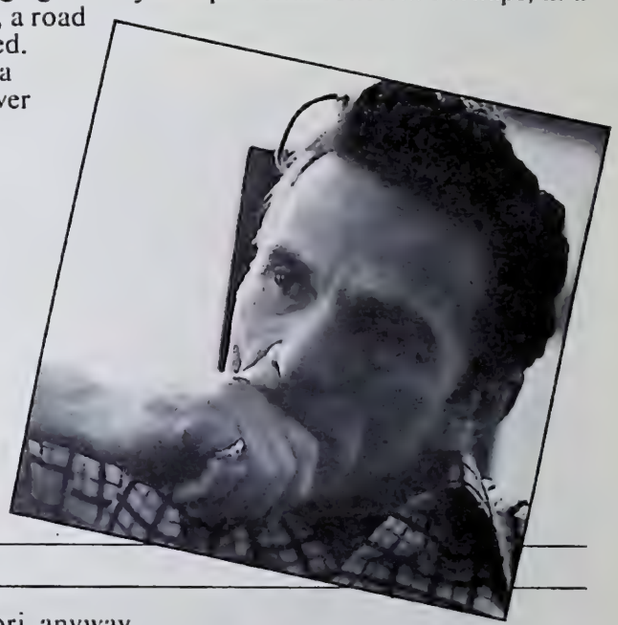
What he seems to wish, is to let the things themselves speak, without imposing upon them his intelligence and manipulation. Choosing actors, for example, whose physical presence in itself creates an "imposition of realism". And as he says in response to my question concerning his preoccupation with themes of the past — an apparent contradiction — he wishes to put the present in a dimension of doubt, and the past is the only force that can usurp the present.

His consistency becomes clear as one watches him work. He refuses, in fact, to impose invented meanings upon the things in front of his camera: once these have been created before being photographed (and thus autonomously of interpretation) they remain flat and pregnant only of the content the costume designer and set decorator have intended. The camera does not participate, as in the classic cinema, in the process of creating meaning. It is, finally, the same method as was used by Chaplin.

It is not easy, finally, to make the mental bridge between the content of his films and the purpose of his making them. One appreciates the attempt, accepts the theory behind it, but awaits results that go beyond "physiognomy-realism". In the end, despite his disavowal, he is again creating a film form that must be appreciated through the mind.

But one thing is clear, and that is that Pasolini is searching out a new way to express his concerns. The period of disappointment in direct political action is not over, and talking to him one receives a total impression of pessimism. Seeking, and not having found — that seems to be his state of the moment, and that would explain why he seems so constantly dissatisfied, so constantly in a hurry. One feels that he recognises the fact that his work is valid only in the moment of creation, and since the cinema is a dreary, meticulous process, he seems to fear that individual works will take longer to complete than a change of ideology — that his technique may not be fast enough for his developing, galloping ideas. Up here in the Persian desert one feels very clearly that he is traversing his own desert, his own forty years of preparation for another, clearer social view. Perhaps once found, such a view can restore to his works the coherence they once expressed.

The day after we recorded the interview that follows, Pasolini, his actors, his cameras and his crew were all evicted by military emissaries from the courtyard of the mosque. The Mullahs had phoned Tehran and complained — it seems that donkeys were not supposed to enter the holy area, nor was dancing to be allowed within earshot of the Muezzin. The setback gave me time to digest what I had seen, but for Pasolini it was disastrous; impatiently he consumed his daily green salad with goats' cheese in the plastic, modern hotel coffee-shop, while the production manager flew to Tehran to try and fix things with state visits and Bakhshish. Needless to say, shooting soon resumed, somewhat subdued, somewhat lower in key, closer to the human beings, closer to the dust and the slow speed of the country. The splendor of the mosques and the grand design gave way to a personal concern. Perhaps, in a small way, a road was pointed. A road to a small answer to a large search.



The Interview

Bachmann: Watching you shoot these films that are concerned with the past, one cannot help feeling that perhaps you are disappointed with the present. We critics frequently make the unfortunate mistake of trying to associate a creator with a specific idea, only because he has at one point expressed it. One tends, thus, to look to you for politically engaged films. Have you now decided consciously to give those up?

Pasolini: I have seen a whole life go by. I used to have a future, and believe in it, which is beginning to be only a past. I no longer believe anything can really be done in a political sense.

When you say "political", do you mean it as I intended it in my question — namely defending a specific ideology — or do you simply mean any kind of group stimulation in the service of an ideal?

I think the only thing one can hope for is the creation of a series of relationships with an ever-increasing number of single individuals. Not groups. I do not believe in working in a decidedly social, mundane, organised way. Not a priori, anyway.

Your name continues to appear on posters, on the bottom of petitions, on the speakers' list at union meetings, and in activities of political groups in Italy...

True. While I have lost my belief I still continue to act, to behave socially, as if I hadn't lost it: when a real problem presents itself — an alive, important cause, like a union fight or opposing the stupidity of festivals — I participate and contribute as I have always done, in accordance with a certain ideology, a certain political position. I do this although in reality it is a sacrifice, since I no longer sincerely believe in the outcome.

Brecht once said that one should only engage in battles one has a chance to win. I assume that what you derive from this attitude is a certain satisfaction, a victory in a battle with yourself perhaps. Or why engage in something that appears useless?

I obtain that which it is humanly possible to obtain. A tension is created from which something new is always born, even if it is something we had not planned. Usually

PHOTOS BY DEBORAH BEER

I used to have a future, and believed in it, which is beginning to be only a past.

this is something less than we would have hoped for. One makes small arrangements in a given moment, small compromises which are never definite, but from which other solutions may grow, or from which one regresses further.

Is this an attitude of yours that grew from your exposure to political action in the specifically Italian arena?

It grows from seeing what is happening around me. We had fought hard, and now with the government changes we have fallen back, achievements have been cancelled. I believe we have to be more realistic. It's the stoic position, the pre-Christian one, let's say. While one is young or at least of an active age, one can continue to believe, and perhaps one should. But I would be ridiculous if I continued believing. I only behave as if I believed.

What does your stoic position achieve for you as an individual, as a creator?

Since my vocation is literary and artistic, and thus beyond being simply ideological or political (since I am, thus, what is called an "author"), I believe very much in the concreteness of things. At its worst this concreteness disintegrates and one finds oneself identifying with a form of pragmatism I must rationally condemn. Pragmatism and empiricism are dangerous, because they may end up building the myth of irrational action, which is at the base of fascism.

You mean to say fascism for you represents a natural corollary to our mythology of achievement in industrial society?

In Italy, there is this danger. Pragmatism often becomes a myth of action, a rite of facts in themselves, of activity and practicality, and here fascism has grown out of these myths, becoming a form of irrationality.

How does the mythology of action as advanced by the left differ in structure so as to avoid this danger, or does it avoid it?

The left philosophy, basing itself upon an idea, upon a dialectic — in other words upon a maximum of rationale such as is represented by theories of Marx and Lenin — is first thought and then action. Action becomes the integration of thought. In fascist theory, on the other hand, precedence was given to action, irrationally, and thought remained a dream, a sentiment, a generic d'Annunzian form, popular and rhetoric, that pushed people to act before they could think.

I would love to agree that this mechanism had remained a province of fascism; unfortunately the sequence you describe — at least the psychological sequence of what happens inside a human being exposed to emotional pressure in the guise of rationality — this mechanism of peer-group psychosis, is common coin in most political movements of the younger generations. Of course, like there is black magic and white magic, you could say that when following the leader unthinkingly is done for a good cause it is distinguishable from when it serves fascism, but I would consider that a dangerous theory.

True; in fact the danger of action prevailing over thought has been notable recently in the extra-parliamentary movements of the left with their "immediate intervention" policy, their neo-terrorism in literature, their judging everything by its immediate utility, their proposing repulsion almost as a physical fact. This attitude is typically Italian and French and requires great attention, because it is always open, objectively, to the insertion of provocatory elements. The opposition can easily find a home in the ranks of that kind of left movement, because of the similarity in attitude which no longer clearly separates the camps. At the moment at which the young people of the left who call themselves marxist allow action to prevail over thought, they approach, or rather they move on a *terrain franc* with, the fascists. They accept the same position of relationship with reality which is held by their adversary. Until about ten years ago, it was unthinkable that such an adversary wouldn't give himself away at once in an intellectual milieu, but today the possible *agent provocateur* can move calmly, because there is something that really links him to a *gauchiste:* an entire type of philosopy, a way of life, a way of projecting himself, of dressing — in short, of existing.

Are not the similarities wider than that? I mean, aren't we all becoming fairly similar anyway under the hail of television and a plastic mode of existence that imposes an ever-greater conformity, even a conformity of non-conformity?

What is growing, is the tendency to equivocate. Possibly the individual in our artificial subculture doesn't even recognise his indecision. But as you know, it is the mass of the undecided that create the power of fascism.

If stressing action leads to fascism, how does art escape? Isn't the creative one primarily an "act" as well?

I recognise very well the dangers of pragmatism and its temptations; writing a poem is an act, yes, and making a film is a concrete fact, but these are the only real things in which I believe, the only concessions I make to action. While not believing other things, I do believe in the concreteness of a relationship between him who does and him who exploits or receives, between writer and reader. And this is a relationship between an individual and a second individual. This kind of relationship I still believe in.

Do you think you will be able to maintain this belief for long? Isn't the cinema, as a form, developing along rather reactionary lines?

Perhaps I am believing in something that is about to end. The relationships in the media aren't really between two individuals any more, but between an individual and a mass. In the cinema, for example, that is really the basic definition of the relationship, and it becomes ever more this way.

Why go on filming at all, then?

At the moment, I believe, there is still a possibility of some sort of relationship of a personal nature, since the film *I* make is seen by *you.* There is still a space between individual and individual. The reactions in the full or empty cinema hall *do* condition our own reactions, but there still remains a certain degree of liberty through which an individual can receive my work as an individual. In television this is already less possible. The danger is that all culture will become mass culture, and that thus any thing, even the most personal, becomes a form of mass stimulus, becomes an anthropological form of being.

Perhaps the growing generations prefer this? Perhaps it gives them greater security? Perhaps the humanist approach was only useful for a limited epoch, and is useless in our time of international monopolies?

If today there is still some small space for a culture of humanist tendency, it is perhaps because there are some survivors. The younger generations, in fact, are less and less able to advance and collaborate in that kind of culture. They have become, for example, a-critical with regard to form, because they no longer sense formal problems, having been brutalised by a series of horrible forms and thus lost the sense of beauty, of aesthetics, of achieved completeness. They have totally lost the formal aspects and at the same time have been corrupted profoundly by the pragmatist philosophies where to be important you must be useful and not beautiful. Useful in the immediate sense, without cultural mediation.

Couldn't a film be beautiful and useful at the same time?

We are talking about the attitude of the young. Clearly a work of art can also be born out of an ethic concept of utility, but this would be a mediated form of utility, much more difficult and complex to realise. When I define film as a concrete fact, as action, I do not mean the film as political action, as those groups seeking immediate utility are trying to define it, but I mean action in its widest sense.

You are linked to a tradition of realism, but seem to be developing in a direction either away from it or towards a re-definition of it. Could you try and attempt one?

For me, the main characteristic of the films I make is to put something "real" on the screen, but something the spectator has become unused to seeing. Television has so modified a type of "unreality" — has so strongly habituated us to its language of falsification — that sometimes even the language of common, commercial Western films seems less banal than the stereotypes we see on TV.

You mean that what TV presents as "real" is manipulated or partial?

The model of the human being as presented on TV is ever more *piccolo borghese,* hypocritical, conformist.

How do you work against that in your films?

My ambition in making films is to make them political in the sense of being profoundly "real" in intent: in choosing the characters, in that which they say and in that which they do. That is why I refuse the political fiction film. One of the least appetizing things of the past few years are precisely those fashionable political films, these fictional political films, which are the films of half truths, of reality-unreality, of consolation and of falseness. They are made to pacify the consciousness. Instead of arousing polemics they suffocate it. When a spectator has no doubts and can recognise at once, in accordance with his own ideology, on which side he is meant to be in the film, that means all is calm. But that is the definition of fiction! I avoid fiction in my films. I do nothing to console, nothing to embellish reality, nothing to sell the goods. I pick actors whose sheer physical presence suffices to convey this sense of reality. I do not pick them at random but in order to offer examples of reality. From **Decameron** on, the *personaggi* of my films are exactly the opposite of the ones you find in television or in the so-called escapist cinema. And that is only on the level of the figurative aspect. From here on in, that is what counts: this physicality of the characters, imposing itself, whereas in **Accattone** there was present, too, an ideological thesis which carried me through **Uccelacci e Uccellini.**

That in itself does not explain to me why you are choosing, for this new, "physical" cinema, stories taken from the past and from classical texts.

I prefer to move in the past now, because I believe the past to be the only force than can really contest the present. This may be an oblique way of contesting, but I find that all those values which formed us, with all their atrocity and their negative aspects, are now the values which can put the present in doubt. So I love this reconstruction of the past, of psychologies which at the present are no longer real, because I feel that the characters of these films still exist in our days, but they have become rare, they are survivors.

What about characters of today who contest the present?

After an unexpected, violent revolution in the sixties, of a technological type, and the false revolution of 1968 — which presented itself as marxist while in reality it was only a form of self-criticism of the *bourgeoisie* (with the bourgeoisie using the young in order to destroy the myths that bothered it) — the restoration manages to save from the past only the most negative aspects. A young person who today is 20-25 years of age is the fruit of an experience — that of 1968-70 — which has placed him in a position of complete rupture with the fathers. This rupture has caused the formation of a sort of ghetto of the young, a ghetto in which the young have placed themselves, enclosed within the walls they themselves have erected against the preceding generations.

In other words, in answer to my question, you do not feel that the ones who today profess to contest, are in reality contesting, but are aimlessly separating themselves culturally?

... creating a separation that in fact causes a dialectical regression. This always happens when the natural relationships cease. In separating themselves, the young have created a dualistic logic instead of a natural one, I mean instead of thesis — antithesis — synthesis, they have stopped at the antithesis. And we know that when you stop moving, you regress. Thus, in the young, certain historical and ethnographic characteristics have been reformed with major violence, which their fathers had, in fact, outlived and overcome. Certain forms of conformism, certain forms of intellectual timidity, which their parents had eliminated. At this historical moment, a "new father" is, in a certain sense, more advanced than the sons, despite the fact that the sons scream and agitate themselves so much. In reality, in the sons all those provincial characteristics are flowering, all those conformist and moralistic attitudes, which we had hoped ended once and for all. And this is really happening as a result of this monstrous barrier, which they have themselves erected, separating themselves from preceding generations. Now according to me even this is, if we agree to look at the *bourgeoisie* anthropomorphically, a kind of birth of the Moloch. The idea of this generation-barrier serves the Moloch; it creates for him new consumers, an enormous number of new consumers.

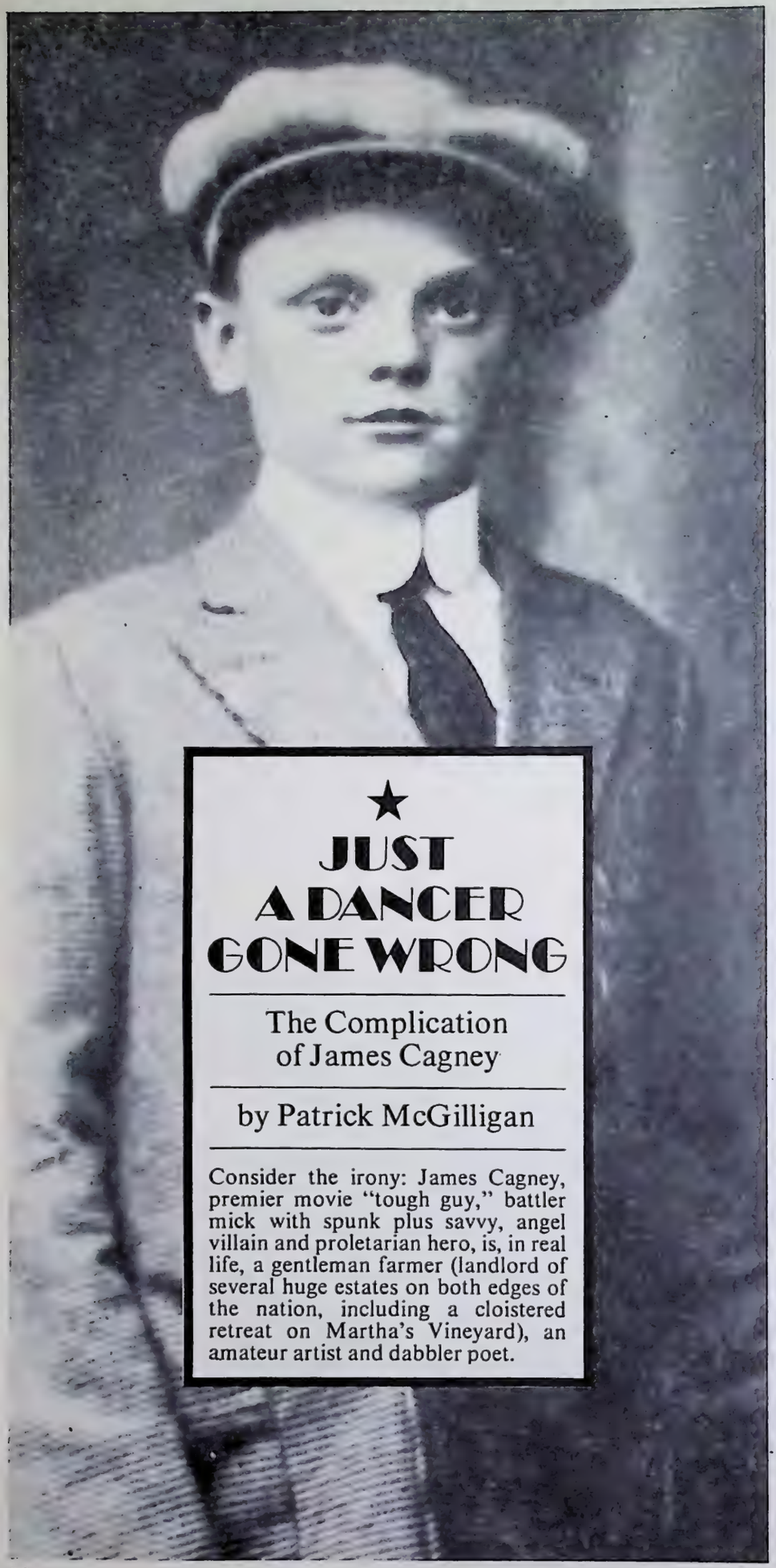
So you have chosen not to treat the current generations in your films?

As far as my films of now are concerned, seen subjectively, from my own, internal viewpoint, I must say that these last ones of the trilogy of life (**Decameron, Canterbury Tales** and **1001 Nights**) represent a fascinating and marvellous experience. I don't think any of the critics have been able to understand the meaning this experience has had for me — independently of the results — this experience of entering into the most mysterious workings of artistic creation, this preceeding into the ontology of narration, in the making of cinema-cinema, cinema as we used to see it as children, without however falling victim to commercialism or lack of care. I find it the most beautiful idea I have ever had, this wish to tell, to recount, for the sheer joy of telling and recounting, for the creation of narrative myths, away from ideology, precisely because I have understood that to make an ideological film is finally easier than making a film outwardly lacking ideology. Outwardly: because every film has its ideology, first of all its intrinsic truth to itself, its poetry, and then its external ideology, which is the more or less self-evident political attitude.

Thus you maintain, I believe (if I understand you correctly), that you are dealing with questions of the present in the guise of the past? Or am I making it sound too banal?

It is much more difficult to make films in which the ideology is hidden, indirect, implicit, than to make thesis films, defending a clear point of view. At least for me it is simpler; for me, who has always been an ideological director, and who has always, in every film, attempted to treat a specific problem. For me, making films which seem to have no ideological substructure, in which all is dissolved in being, in just being, has been the most intriguing involvement. And no critic has had the imagination to understand this. But that is why I am continuing along this road, despite all those who keep asking me when I expect to return to making the kind of films I used to make. They still have not understood that if they expect scandals from me, *that* is the scandal.

END



★ JUST A DANCER GONE WRONG

The Complication of James Cagney

by Patrick McGilligan

Consider the irony: James Cagney, premier movie "tough guy," battler mick with spunk plus savvy, angel villain and proletarian hero, is, in real life, a gentleman farmer (landlord of several huge estates on both edges of the nation, including a cloistered retreat on Martha's Vineyard), an amateur artist and dabbler poet.

He is the very antithesis of his celluloid image — so truly different from the cocksure Tom Powers who wallops his moll in the face with a half grapefruit in **The Public Enemy**, so unlike even the brash and headstrong showman of **Yankee Doodle Dandy**, utterly removed in character from the lunatic killer, Cody Jarrett, of **White Heat**.

Perhaps the greatest talkies star of Hollywood's "Golden Age," Cagney is immortalized as the cinema's prototype gangster. That is his sadly simplified public legacy, a testament that neglects his enigmatic and individual aspects, especially his long, bitter struggle for artistic independence. And, incidentally, his once-liberal fighting politics — long ago soured.

A few moments as **The Public Enemy** in 1931, in his groundbreaking, historic role as a grapefruit-wielding, everyman punk, buttressed by other memorable gangster roles through the years, have sparked a filmic legend that dies hard. The actor has not yet performed who so authentically projected his vision of overweening manhood to such overwhelming mass applause, always preserving just the proper, tiny fleck of charm and grace to dispel too-evil implications.

And yet, during a career that spanned three decades, Cagney never surrendered notions of Shakespeare (realized only once in the lavish Warner Brothers version of **A Midsummer Night's Dream**), J.M. Synge, Sean O'Casey and other respectable playwrights. He always considered himself as a hoofer at core — a robust song-and-dance man.

Almost forgotten among his slew of powerful hoodlum parts are the talents of a performing artist whose never-fully-realized range — from the manchild of such comic films as **Blonde Crazy** to the vaudevillian tyro of less frequent musical epics such as **Footlight Parade** — is surely the most impressive of all American film actors, and whose contribution to the style and character of the American sound cinema is unique and beyond dispute.

For 12 years, during which time he refused scripts which still arrive with the regularity of sunrise, Cagney sat in contented retirement, refusing to appear in public, dodging interviews with a passion that recalled Greta Garbo and sparking persistent rumors that he was either fat or dead.

He is raising cattle with a vengeance nowadays, fighting occasional

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conservation causes (such as his opposition to a proposed expansion of the Martha's Vineyard airport five years ago), writing his memoirs (as "self-defense" for several hack versions of his life which sprinkled the market recently) and still dancing daily for exercise, no doubt polishing some of the very routines he executed in vaudeville 50 years ago.

No, he is not dead but he is decidedly fatter than prime, and changed. His last movie was the frenetic **One, Two, Three**, directed by Billy Wilder, in 1961. He is 74 years old. In March, he returned to the public eye when the American Film Institute (AFI) hosted its salute to Cagney on nationwide television.

Only the second tribute of its kind — the first such award was given director John Ford in a similar telecast, attended by President Nixon, one year ago — the ceremony signalled long overdue recognition for Cagney, who has lived in the shadow of a Bogart cult in this country since his retirement.

The award came on the heels of a prestigious retrospective at the New York City Cultural Center last spring, the release of three Cagney film books within one year, and a spray of Cagney feature articles in major national magazines, many of them based on the furtive news conference a shy Cagney held in California prior to the AFI program.

All of which means rightful honor to the incredibly versatile player who, in the words of Pat O'Brien (a close friend who co-starred in eight slaphappy films with the "tough guy") is really "just a dancer gone wrong."

Just how wrong, however, is a matter for reflection — because, in the rush to honor the City Kid of filmdom, devotees have comfortably forgotten the original spirit of the actor who, in **The Public Enemy**, captured the imagination of a nation sunken in depressed times, with resiliency, and humor.

That spirit existed off-screen and on. For Cagney, success was bittersweet; he never wholly embraced the myth he fostered. Early on, he garnered a reputation as a scrapper, rebel and true-believer; his cinematic fame was as the likeable mug of such exciting, widely-praised films as **Mayor of Hell**, **Angels with Dirty Faces** and **The Roaring Twenties**. He was characteristically cast as an antisocial gangster who was spawned in poverty. But simultaneously, in the Thirties, when he served as a convenient Hollywood symbol for the hope-hungry nation, he was also among the most politically active performers in Hollywood.

He was one of the early organizers of the Screen Actor's Guild (and later served as the union's president); he was noted for his contributions to various liberal causes (among them, the Scottsboro Boys Fund and the Salinas Valley Lettuce Strike); and he openly supported progressive candidates for political office (he was a leader of the "actor's rebellion" when studio magnates tried to crush the California gubernatorial candidacy of radical Upton Sinclair).

So energetic and so public was he in the pursuit of humane and reformist causes that he was twice labelled a Communist by California grand juries; twice he was acquitted of the charges.

The social instincts acquired in his impoverished New York City childhood flared dramatically during his Thirties tenure with Warner Brothers. In 1931, and again, in 1932, Cagney stunned the film colony by walking off the studio lot, demanding a higher salary and better roles. He chafed at playing characters his beloved mother would have despised; he pleaded for noncriminal parts — and parts of clear, social merit. His audacity was an inspiration to other performers pinched by the slavish demands of a then-typical Hollywood contract; Bette Davis, for example, sued the brothers Warner in court shortly thereafter.

Like America's great cinema artists before him — Chaplin and D.W. Griffith — Cagney sought an independent reckoning of his future.

Finally, in 1936, Cagney gambled for the valued and elusive independence that would permit him to steer his own career. In an unprecedented, daring move, Cagney sued for breach of contract and once again departed from the Warners lot. He signed with Grand National Pictures — a "B" company which claimed Cagney as its only star — for a down payment of $100,000 cash and the essential stipulation that he could reject any story "that doesn't suit him." Besides citing the release of five of his films in a contract year that called for four, the actor pointed to a California theatre which had listed Pat O'Brien's name above Cagney's on the marquee for **Ceiling Zero**, a billing priority that also technically violated Cagney's contract. To the press, Cagney blasted Warners producers for forcing him into films, like **Devil Dogs of the Air** (1935), "which had no reason to be filmed under any circumstances." The star vowed never to return to the Warners studio. "I was sick of carrying a gun and said so," he later remembered.

Intentionally, riskily casting himself adrift from the Hollywood mainstream, Cagney stayed idle for a year while Grand National sought financial backing and the right property. Producers Samuel Goldwyn and David O. Selznick, among others, were interested in signing Cagney for their own projects but they were afraid of litigation by Warners and also of aiding an insubordinate performer. Instead, the Hollywood community of producers (including Goldwyn and Selznick) banded together to blackball the "tough guy." "Though rated among the top box-office draws of the time," *The New York Times* reported, "Cagney remained inactive for a year and it was generally believed in Hollywood that other studios were reluctant to hire him lest they be placed in the position of encouraging a 'rebellious actor.'" It was common knowledge in Hollywood, according to *The Times*, that "other players, notably Bette Davis, are eyeing the company (Grand National) with interest and should the Cagney situation work out, it is possible that there will be considerable contract jumping."

When Grand National finally scraped together enough funds for full production and then selected, with Cagney's approval, the actor's debut independent features, the choices were significant. **Great Guy**, Cagney's first independent for the "B" company, released at the end of 1936, placed Cagney squarely on the side of the law, as zealous, goodnatured meat inspector Johnny Cave. The title of the film, especially significant considering Cagney's "tough guy" reputation at Warners, perhaps derived, meaningfully, from the last line of **G-Men** in which Jeff McCord (Robert Armstrong) grudgingly admits to "sister" Margaret Lindsay, "take care of him, sis, he's a great guy". Thus, in his newborn autonomy, did Cagney associate himself with a film like **G-Men** rather than his image-making **Public Enemy**.

His second (and final) Grand National film, released in 1937, was a musical comedy, **Something to Sing About**, the story of bandleader Terry Rooney (Cagney), a quiet, unassuming fellow who journeys to Hollywood and is "glamourized" against his will. Though neither **Great Guy** nor **Something to Sing About** were Cagney's maiden "great guy" or musical comedy roles (he accomplished both with **Footlight Parade** in 1933, after his second studio walkout), the two Grand National films distinctly mark a denial, a disavowal,

an unsentimental goodbye to his Warners image. **Great Guy** (or **The Pluck of the Irish**, as it was titled in England) and **Something to Sing About** are seminal films in the history of the American cinema because they testify, as no other Hollywood films of the period do, to the individual sensibility of a major motion picture star estranged from the alienating workings of the studio system. Cagney sat in on all of the story conferences for the two films and the results are explicit, thematic works.

At first it was rumored in Hollywood that **Great Guy** would never be finished. Production problems, including the difficulty of persuading another studio to loan out a leading lady, ominously delayed the shooting schedule. When, after a suspenseful year-long hiatus, the film was finally released to the public, few critics were disappointed; some were outright impressed. Based on the *Johnny Cave* stories of *The Saturday Evening Post*, **Great Guy** is a lean, crackling comedy-drama with Cagney as a congenial crusader in the Bureau of Weights and Measures who single-handedly battles a ring of crooks and grafters who are defrauding shoppers by cheating on grocery weights. Ably directed by John Blystone within the shoestring budget of Grand National's limited financial resources, the film is a bouncy, vintage sleeper that contains unlabored performances by a cluster of Irish actors, including gregarious James Burke, buoyant cop Edward J. MacNamara, Edward Brophy, Ed Gargan and Mary Gordon. Cagney's co-star in the picture is Mae Clarke (though Joan Blondell was originally sought for the role — Warners refused to release her); thus is the grapefruit beneficiary of **The Public Enemy** repaid by Cagney for his impolite, historic gesture. She, too, delivers a sweet, comic performance. The entire movie, wrote the reviewer for *The New York Times*, "bears unmistakeable evidence of that Hollywood rarity, complete cooperation of the director and the story and casting departments."

True to its title, **Great Guy** assaults and reverses the principal conventions of a stock "tough guy" film — significantly, Johnny Cave is the antithesis of a character such as Tom Powers. In a meaningful switch, for example, Janet Henry (Mae Clarke) dominates the romantic relationship. She guides Johnny Cave. It is she, for instance, who decides where they will dine (in a simple cafeteria rather than, as Johnny Cave prefers, an elegant restaurant). It is she who then tells Johnny Cave just what and how much he should eat while they are

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Cagney's simplified public legacy as the cinema's prototype gangster neglects his enigmatic and individual aspects, especially his long, bitter struggle for artistic independence.

Johnny Come Lately
The Time of Your Life

shuffling through the cafeteria line. She wins every argument — no contest. Also, in the script of **Great Guy**, a considered point is made against the violence so prevalent in most, previous Cagney films. Himself hospitalized by rough-necks, Johnny Cave's supervisor specifically orders the intrepid inspector to make arrests and pursue his investigations without resorting to his fists — the accepted "tough guy" manner. The conscientious Cave abides by this advice until, challenged by a devious gas station attendant who purloins some incriminating evidence, he flashes a sudden, right-fisted punch. Then, gazing regretfully at his hand, he murmurs sorrowfully, "I promised..." Attempting to define his persona in more compatible, personal, relevant terms, Cagney even interjected quirks of his own into the story. In one scene, Johnny Cave criticizes girlfriend Janet's hat. Offscreen, the actor reportedly harbored an intense dislike for women's hats.

Cagney's performance, meanwhile, is remarkably restrained, a dramatically discernible departure from his Warners roles. Johnny Cave is a subdued, cordial, sensible fellow; he is talkative but also ready and willing to listen; he is level-headed and steady. There is a short, powerful sequence in which Cavanaugh (Robert Bleckler), the villain of the piece, laughs into Johnny Cave's face while the deputy inspector is being grilled for a robbery he didn't commit. Silent, brooding, Cagney stands impassionate before the harangue, revealing only (in a close camera shot) by his hot and dancing eyes a flaming comprehension of the set-up. Warners' Cagney would have replied blindly with his fists. The wiser "great guy" weathered the onslaught with abundant poise. In fact, Johnny Cave yields to fisticuffs at length only once in the film, at the finale when he locks astonished policeman Captain Pat Hanlon (Edward J. McNamara) out of a room while he trounces the top hooligan inside. Yet, the scene is played for tongue-in-cheek laughs. "Unlock this door or I'll break it in," Hanlon barks, as his face relaxes into a smile, then he lights a smoke, "as soon as I finish this cigar."

Another of **Great Guy**'s merits is a progressive political perspective that is in keeping with the best, most forward-looking films of the Warners tradition. Like many films of the period, Warners' own **Bullets or Ballots**, for example, released earlier the same year, **Great Guy** is candid and uncompromising in its revelation, condemnation and exposé of larcenous businessmen and dishonest politicos. Even the local mayor of **Great Guy** is revealed to be a common thief. In one particular, central scene, Johnny Cave, in pursuit of crooked grocery clerks, lectures a roomful of agents, warning the assemblage (and the audience) about criminal merchants and the big-money stakes of price fixing. And, he cautions the investigators further, bribes are an everyday occurrence — so beware. Ironically, **Great Guy** stirred complaints to the Hays Office, protests of a far dissimilar nature than the many provoked earlier by the underworld Cagney. "The depiction of James Cagney as an honest, capable and competent employee in the department of weights and measures in a great city," writes Raymond Moley in his authoritative book *The Hays Office*, "was the signal for vehement outcries from retail grocers and gas-station owners who insisted that the picture 'cast a reflection' on their honesty (curiously enough, it never seems to have occurred to these protestors, as Breen pointed out, that the very existence of such departments as a department of weights and measures indicates the acknowledgement, by the community itself, that there is a need for the supervision of weights and measures in retail stores, including grocery stores and gas stations)."

Less consistent, less fulfilled than **Great Guy**, **Something to Sing About** (re-issued as **Battling Hoofer**), Cagney's second and final Grand National release in 1937, is nevertheless an enthralling film: the story, layered again with precise meaning for Cagney followers, concerned the quest of New York bandleader Terry Rooney (Cagney) for Hollywood film stardom. Granted a movie contract, Rooney is informed by ebullient producer B.O. Regan (Gene Lockhart) that he will be the country's newest acting sensation — despite Rooney's pathetic insistence that he is really a singer-dancer at heart, and would like to so remain. Regardless, an absurd parade of make-up specialists, wardrobe experts and diction tutors begin to inspect and renovate the bandleader for imminent stardom. Already perturbed by his phony image-making, Rooney explodes when a pestering bit player annoys him during final shooting of his first film. He scrambles into a full-pitched brawl on the set, then stalks off the studio lot and sails on a honeymoon cruise with newlywed wife Rita Wyatt (Evelyn Daw). When Rooney returns, he discovers to his amazement that he is a genuine movie star, America's brand-new rage, for the shrewd director of his only film had kept the cameras rolling during the unrehearsed fracas: film fans were enamored with the rip-roaring "tough guy" find. The guileless bandleader is coaxed into signing a lucrative movie contract with one provision of note — he must masquerade as a bachelor so as not to let down his fans, and also to enhance his box-office value. A dilemma arises when gossip columnists float idle rumors of his supposedly-amorous entanglements with other starlets, and his jealous, heartbroken wife withdraws to New York. Resolved, sick of irresponsible press agents and loony producers, Rooney also flees to home — he reconciles with his wife and his former nightclub band just in time for a joyful musical finale. Like the actor who played him, Rooney is presumably permanently estranged from the dream factory called Hollywood.

Coming in the midst of his voluntary separation from Warner Brothers and the Hollywood establishment, **Something to Sing About** was a propitiously timed, categorical, even blunt attack by Cagney on Hollywood, "show people" and the entire movie star syndrome. Producers especially (in perhaps, an intended swing at the brothers Warner) bear the animosity. Studio magnate B.O. Regan is, in the film, an empty-headed, deceitful blowhard who, in one main scene, conspires to award Rooney a catchpenny, substandard movie contract. Directed without verve by Victor Schertzinger, **Something to Sing About** is weakened by visibly inferior production values, including a mediocre off-camera crew of technical collaborators, surely due to Grand National's rapidly-sagging financial health. The settings are embarassingly bare and the stage dressings are awfully simple. Of the cast, only affable William Frawley as chatterbox agent Hank Meyers is particularly enjoyable — apart from Cagney, who is inspired. As in **Great Guy**, the character he portrays is the antithesis of his previous roles: withdrawn, reserved, almost shy, placid though strong. Actually, he doesn't sing a single solo note in **Something to Sing About** — there is a gag at the beginning in which the words of a song are "stolen" every time he opens his mouth to warble. But he dances, though less magnificently than elsewhere, granting the formless choreography (one zippy routine aboard an ocean liner with a chorus of sailors almost seems improvised, badly). Yet, in the dances of **Something to Sing About**, there is an oblique reference, a psychic connection, to Cagney's future that parallels the allusion to **G-Men** in the title of **Great Guy**. In the opening musical extravaganza, "Something to

Sing About", Terry Rooney prances down a flight of makeshift steps. It is the exact movement marshalled by George M. Cohan (Cagney) five years later when he taps a descent from the White House stairs in **Yankee Doodle Dandy**. (Johnny Boyle, the choreographer of Cagney's **Yankee Doodle Dandy** routines, was a chorus member of **Something to Sing About** — perhaps that's the link.)

Grand National had at least one other Cagney work-in-progress, a promising project entitled **Dynamite**, promoted in advance as a "dramatic tale of illegal oil traffic in Texas," when the "B" company surrendered its star. Plagued by the pressures of independent production and the inevitable, overbearing difficulties of financing, the studio returned Cagney to Warners in 1938. In the interim, the court embroilments had been resolved in the actor's favor, the California judge ruling that Cagney had worked beyond the limitations of his contract. And now the Warners studio lured the performer back with a pay boost to $150,000 per picture versus a percentage and the fundamental condition that only two films starring the actor would be released annually, plus some small leeway when it came to rejecting projects. In addition, Cagney's contract guaranteed the hire of his brother William as advisor and associate producer.

By any measure, the demise of Cagney's relationship with Grand National Pictures was a tragic, fateful milestone in his career. If the enterprise had survived (and so absolute was its "death" that the two Grand National features are still among Cagney's rarest-shown, most obscure films), the actor may well have been afforded the opportunity to go beyond the mere two, promising Grand National features — to flex his muscles, to expand, to experiment with a richer, varied, individualistic cinematic expression at this peak juncture of his artistry. But Grand National's Cagney association was doomed from the start, its downfall fated. The smaller organization never had the same capacity for production, promotion and distribution that a major company like Warners did. In 1937, his Grand National year, Cagney slipped from his customary spot on the theatre owners' list of top ten box-office draws. Soon after his return to Warners, he regained his stature in receipts.

In 1942, after another stint with Warners, ending with the wildly successful **Yankee Doodle Dandy**, still the patriotic performer's favorite film, Cagney quit the studio again and formed Cagney Productions in partnership with his brother William. Still impatient with Warners roles, the bright exception of **Yankee Doodle Dandy** notwithstanding, and still itching to niggle with independent production, to control his own career, financially and artistically, he took advantage of the film's boom popularity (and a deceased contractual bind to Warners) to go solo once more. The new company was to be distributed through United Artists. Brother Bill signed on as company President; brother Ed hired on as company business manager; brother James, of course, was sole company star. An embittered Jack Warner warned prophetically: "He'll find out that he needs me as much as I need him." Wrote one contemporary periodical: "One of the first orders received by Chuck Daggett, Cagney Productions' clever press agent, was to 'kill' the socko Cagney. Jimmy wanted the chance to appear as an artist." Financial support for the new outfit came from the

AFI

Sinatra, Raft, Cagney...

Bankers Trust Company of New York and Security First National of Los Angeles.

It was to be a frustrating, short-lived, if brilliant experiment. Their first production was **Johnny Come Lately**, a forgotten, marvelous little film, directed by William K. Howard, described by Bill for *The Saturday Evening Post* as "a simple tale of human hearts" (and reportedly chosen by the Cagney brothers only after 400 scripts had been examined). **Johnny Come Lately**, adapted from a Louis Bromfield novelette entitled *McLeod's Folly*, featured Cagney as a mysterious tramp newspaperman, a charming and heroic vagabond who writes poetry, sketches caricatures, reads Dickens and leads a grass-roots uprising against the town fat cat in partnership with a kindly old newspaper editor (stage actress Grace George, in her only, beatific film appearance). The leisurely, moralistic movie boasts an enchanting cast of eccentrics, including Edward McNamara (as the crooked town boss who sings melodious nonsense rhymes to himself), Robert Barrat (as a timid legislator who once broke up with his sweetheart when he insisted on pouring catsup over everything), Hattie McDaniel (as Aida, a sultry cook who flirts voraciously with Cagney), Marjorie Main (as saloon madam Gashouse Mary who insists "I run a straight place"), Margaret Hamilton and George Cleveland (the Fergusons, lifelong employees of Vinnie McLeod's small-town newspaper) and even a tiny pet mouse "who comes around every lunchtime for his food." The most exhilarating exposition of Cagney's "alter ego" ever recorded on film, **Johnny Come Lately** also affords a glance at the actor's personal philosophical temperament at the time: A nostalgic evocation of a make-believe past, the film is also a visionary re-affirmation of the brand of populist politics elsewhere championed by director Frank Capra. But, an anachronism in 1943, when it was released during the Second World War amidst a flood of war films, **Johnny Come Lately** failed miserably at the box-office — the whimsical film offended critics and audiences who expected typical, hard-hitting films from the Cagney production firm. Wrote a perceptive James Agee for *Time*: "Grace George seems effortlessly to have learned what so many transplanted Broadway actors ache over — how to project her touching elegance in a medium new to her. James Cagney, who in his time had to plant fists or a grapefruit on young ladies' faces and shoes on young ladies' behinds, here develops his tenderest relationships with middle-aged ladies (the Misses George, Main and Hattie McDaniel), and each of them is worth a dozen average love scenes... These pleasures would have been all but impossible to manufacture in any of the large studios, for they are given their warmth and life by the pleasure that the Cagney's large cast and the whole production outfit obviously took in doing a job as they wanted to do it. Bit players who have tried creditably for years to walk in shoes that pinched them show themselves in the picture as the very competent actors they always were: there has seldom been as good a cinematic gallery of U.S. small-town types."

Then, in an effort to recoup box-office favor, Cagney Productions offered **Blood on the Sun** in 1945, an ordinary actioner about intrigue in pre-World War I Japan — therefore aimed at the anti-Japanese sentiment of the era — with little to recommend it save the screen comeback of Sylvia Sidney. It, too, did middling business at the box-office. Three years later, after a role in Henry Hathaway's **13 Rue Madeleine** gained the performer additional funds, the brothers Cagney mounted their version of William Saroyan's **The Time of Your**

Life, a film which was the independent Cagney's swan song, first cousin to the heartfelt **Johnny Come Lately**. Saroyan refused lucrative offers for the film rights to his play from several major studios in order to lease his famous property to Cagney Productions, his personal choice, for seven years. The odd terms of the bargain are the principal reason why **The Time of Your Life** is the rarest of all of Cagney's films, unavailable for television showing or rental in the United States today (only two known copies exist, one in the Cagney vaults and one in the national archives). Yet, with **Johnny Come Lately**, it is the most wistful and imaginative, the most beautiful of Cagney's films — and one which is blankly opposed to his heretofore public image as rowdy. A Cagney family production in the most complete sense — James Cagney starred, William Cagney produced, Jeanne Cagney co-starred and Edward Cagney served as Assistant Production Manager — **The Time of Your Life** dwells on the bizarre collection of people who frequent a waterfront San Francisco saloon. The winning, outlandish cast included William Bendix as the ever-grumbling bartender Nick, James Barton as a crustily magnificent Kit Carson, Paul Draper as Harry, the mercurial dancer, Wayne Morris, Broderick Crawford, Ward Bond, James Lydon and Jeanne Cagney. Director H. C. Potter gave the familiar play a casual and fanciful mood, and Cagney himself dominated the story as the cheerful, impulsive, profoundly philosophic Joe. It is (like the Joe of Saroyan's invention) a characterization so absolutely divorced from his Warners past, so reflective and easy-going and captivating, that it is even defined by a physical ploy: The Cagney of **The Time of Your Life** never budges from his customary seat near the bar, even explaining at one point that he cannot dance — "I don't even like to walk." The Warners Cagney was contrarily described wholly by his physicality — his walk and bodily movements. In **The Time of Your Life**, the enigmatic Joe moves only to buy children's toys on a whim or to bet large sums of money on racehorses by inspiration — and, at the finale, to trounce the "heavy" of the storyline (an ending that Cagney Productions changed, since Saroyan intended the villain to be shot at the conclusion of the tale). Again, the film failed at the box-office, and only James Agee was appreciative: "Those who made the picture have given it something very sure. It's obvious that they love the play and their work in it, and their affection and enjoyment are highly contagious."

His leanest period of activity, yet in another sense his most prolific, Cagney's seven years of absolute independence produced only four films, three of them independents. When **The Time of Your Life** succumbed at the box-office, the actor was persuaded to return to Warners once again, for the climactic **White Heat** in 1949. Though his cherished Cagney Productions was kept alive, by a considered clause in his contract that guaranteed at least two additional films by the family studio, thus assuring that Cagney could persist with his independent cinema vigil, the firm nonetheless died a slow, sputtering death. The fading company produced **Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye** in 1951, considered by many critics to be a masterpiece of film noir, and the erratic **A Lion is in the Streets**, with Cagney as a Huey Long-ish figure, directed by Raoul Walsh in 1953. Two final films generally considered semi-independents include **Short Cut to Hell** in 1957, a bland re-make of **This Gun for Hire** with Cagney in his sole directorial effort (the actor was distinctly more at ease in front of the camera); and **The Gallant Hours** in 1960, which resurrected the company name in association with Robert Montgomery Productions, for a heavy-handed bio-drama of Admiral William F. ("Bull") Halsey, with Cagney as the skipper.

Reagan, Hope, Cagney.

The vexing tragedy of Cagney's career (despite his many, superb portrayals in studio films) is that his promising independent features were so few — an inevitability, perhaps, due to the awesome monopoly of Hollywood majors. He was never allowed to develop the flash he displayed as a dancer in **Yankee Doodle Dandy** or the honest sentiment he offered in **Johnny Come Lately**. He was rarely permitted to stray from the "tough guy" characterizations he performed so well; too soon, he abandoned his political integrity.

As the actor grew older and wealthier, with the advent of World War II and the coming of McCarthyism, Cagney grew conservative, even reactionary — at about the same time as friend Ronald Reagan (who shared the table with Cagney at the recent AFI tribute), he recalls today. The change is vividly documented by Garson Kanin in his book, *Tracy and Hepburn*. Kanin writes that pal Spencer, a lifelong liberal, eventually came to disagree vociferously with Cagney, whose beliefs paled over the years.

And Cagney's films began to mirror his streamlined politics. In **White Heat**, the gangster Cagney is no longer an anti-social outcast who is described sympathetically by his poverty background; he is transformed in the film into a maniac, and no apology is given for his ruthless behavior. In **One, Two, Three,** Cagney is a suitable protagonist for Billy Wilder's cold war barbs. One of the star's few "performances" after retirement, meanwhile, was a voice-over narration in 1962, for a Department of Defense documentary entitled **Road to the Wall**: With this shabby, cliché-ridden film that poorly disguised a recitative of anti-communist slogans, the actor came full circle from the days in the Thirties when his social activism had caused others to wonder if he was Red.

So, with some regret for what might have been, Cagney might be remembered best as a Chaplin of the Talkies, as precisely fitted to the requirements and demands of the sound era as Charles Chaplin was so beautifully suited to the silent era. Cagney expertly utilized speed and motion and noise and gesture, including the chatterbox jabber of his non-stop voice — that whiny, nasal voice and triumphant laugh are permanent sound-images in the American scheme of things.

Chaplin failed with audiences when he extended his persona to include the highly-personal **Monsieur Verdoux**. Cagney failed similarly with **Johnny Come Lately** and **The Time of Your Life**.

Both created enduring cinematic personas with associated meaning — there was much of the social critic in both. This is obvious not only in **Johnny Come Lately,** Cagney's campaigning tramp film, but in much of their respective works. They were thematic cousins — the Twenties Chaplin and the Thirties Cagney — by implication, they were champions of the little guy and the hope of the world. And, in Chaplin's exile to Europe and Cagney's own desertion of Hollywood in the Sixties, there is the same distinct element of — not simply retirement — but disenchantment, resignation, defeat and (finally) retreat from the world.

END

Porn Symposium

"If it is not erotic, it is not interesting"
— Fernando Arrabal

A reminiscence: My First

Pornography struck me, initially, as a very kindly enterprise. There I was, a lumpy adolescent lost in a glandular miasma, longing to behold an unclothed woman. I had the basic structural details down — thanks to glossy $25 books called something like The Art of the Nude, *some art, har har — but I was missing the interrelationships, the process of woman. Looking was all I had in mind; the idea of doing things in concert with naked women was impossibly far-fetched. And it turned out that there were people in the world who actually* knew what I wanted. *No such compassion existed in the hearts of the other adults I encountered. But here, if certain discreet advertisements were to be believed, there were certain women who desired me to see them unclothed, the brazen darlings. Sure, they wanted me to spend money for the privilege, but there was nothing I would rather spend money for. How thoughtful, I mused. What a swell bunch of guys and girls they must be.*

So, one fraught day in the full flower of my 14th year, I took the bus to Spring Street in seediest Los Angeles. I could have gone to the live burlesque show, but I knew my heritage. Between a small real woman on a stage and a large celluloid woman on a screen, it was no contest. Burlesque shows were like my father's dirty jokes — they depended on shared cultural knowledge not vouchsafed to my generation. Goodbye, Tempest Storm; Hello, ***The Immoral Mr. Teas.***

Here's the plot of ***Mr. Teas****, insofar as I can remember it — it doesn't play the art house revival circuit much. Mr. Teas, a chubby, goateed* schlemiel, *wanders through life meeting women in ordinary workaday situations. His mind clouds (special effects); he envisions them naked. We see these visions. Thus: Mr. Teas orders a cup of coffee in a restaurant. He stares at the waitress. Suddenly, she is naked (except for her apron, since pubic hair was still taboo), serving the coffee. The camera lingers on her breasts for a minute. Then on to the next situation.*

Well, sir, this was my cup of tea. It was truly pornography for dumbbells. These young ladies never did anything remotely erotic, but what did I know about erotic? Everything *was fucking erotic, just by existing. Especially the stuff I'd never seen move before. The elaborate wave patterns described by the breast of a walking woman! Oh, my America, my new found land! The other part I liked was that nothing was required of my surrogate, Mr. Teas. None of the women were interested in him at all; they scarcely seemed to notice him. The Invisible Man is the perfect voyeur. That was just fine with me, since I was still unclear as to what my exact duties were beyond a lot of furious caressing. Also, of course, the schmuck was no threat when I began my confused mental ravishment of the various women thus displayed.*

What did I know about erotic?

I saw ***The Immoral Mr. Teas*** *three times, and eagerly gobbled up subsequent examples of the genre, like* ***Eve and the Handyman*** *and* ***Not Tonight, Henry****. After a time, I left the pleasures of pornography for some rather more complex and companionable sexual behavior. Later, at the time of* ***Deep Throat****, I decided to check my old synapses. It was okay, but it wasn't the same. The curiosity was gone; I didn't need the gynecology. It's not nearly as liberated or healthy, I suppose, but I do prefer* ***Mr. Teas****. Pornography, after all, should be for the innocent.*

Jon Carroll

Eroticism vs. Porn, by an ex-practitioner

"I think anyone who doesn't want to stick their finger up a five-year-old girl's skirt or lick a nine-year-old boy's ass is a pervert"

— Taylor Mead

Probably no other subject except Manifest Destiny vs. Free Will is so open to speculation as the question concerning the difference between eroticism and pornography. I speak with certainty when I say I know what turns me on, but is there a difference between what turns me on erotically and what turns me on pornographically?

Obviously, I'm not going to try to establish any absolute truths here (actually, the only absolute truth I know for sure is that whenever I turn around my ass is behind me), but three years ago, when I was making films for Leo Productions in San Francisco (Sutter Cinema), I had a lot of ideas about what makes a pornographic film pornographic, and what raises it to the level of eroticism. These ideas, of course, were concerned with Art. Note the implicit value judgement that eroticism is somehow better, or more respectable, than pornography, or that pornography is a deficient form of eroticism. This is definitely an elitist attitude, and now I'm not so sure about it. After all, what has Art got to do with it?

One reason for the value judgement that pornographic "art" is somehow wrong or inferior comes from the refusal to acknowledge pornography as a legitimate form in its own right — a wish to ignore or suppress the real *purpose* of pornography; a feeling that it is basically an aberration, and possibly only a temporary one. At this point, I'm more inclined to agree with Havelock Ellis' view that pornography is a permanent element of civilized man's social life, and that it fulfills a very real need in his psyche.

Specifically, in terms of film, I think a lot of the ill will toward pornography could actually be chalked up to bad technique. Pornography is not synonymous with badly executed pornography. Bad technique does not have to be a part of the definition of pornography just because, historically, they have been inseparable. Or does it? Someone else might easily argue that the shabbiness of the technique actually enhances the pornographic effect. In that case, I would say that it is not bad technique at all, but effective technique.

This idea would have been untenable to me when I was working at Leo Productions, because I was more interested in the artistic effect than the pornographic one. I was constantly annoyed by the demand to minimize the storyline. The audience didn't want plot, I was told, they wanted one fuck scene after another without the normal time/space reality intruding. They didn't want character development, they wanted only faceless bodies doing the animal act.

I didn't understand this mentality at the time. After all, I figured I was giving them all the fucking I could get into the frame, why could I not *also* add some Art at no extra cost? I explained their incomprehensible (to me) rejection of plot and character as vulgarity and laziness. I don't now think that was really the case. I was just in the wrong genre. You don't ask an Abstract Expressionist to paint the faces of movie stars for a billboard advertisement. It's a definite conflict of interest.

The reason porn viewers didn't want a storyline is because it left no room for them to interject their own stories and fantasies into the anomalous episodes, and the reason they didn't want any real characters was because all they needed were some two-legged placebos to put their own characters into. Their own stories and characters would always be more enjoyable to them than mine.

Art is not readily accessible to everyone because it has a certain "ivory tower" status that keeps it that way, but sex is everybody's specialty and nobody has to improve on anybody else's way of enjoying it. We're all artists in that medium. As Baudelaire wrote, "Sexuality is the lyricism of the masses." Pornography is a very special kind of art.

The advertisement that says: "Explicit hard-core porno! Leaves nothing to the imagination!" is actually saying we've got everything you need to let your imagination soar! It just doesn't work if there's no room for the imagination — and in this case storylines and characters would take up that room. The viewer has to have his own "artistic" freedom. It's the viewer's fantasy, and not the director's, which is important.

The true art of the porno filmmaker is to stay the hell out of it and deliver the goods — in as untampered a form as possible.

By "the goods," I mean bodies and beds (or any variation of props). This is not to say that the filmmaker shouldn't create. He should, but he shouldn't complete. He should create situations, not stories — situations in which the imaginative fantasies of the viewer will have the greatest freedom, unobstructed by any extraneous aesthetic.

What about humor? Reading back over these thoughts, I notice that I have been taking this whole thing kind of seriously, when, in fact, the one thing that made my experiences at Leo enjoyable — I might even say bearable — was maintaining a very agile sense of humor. This is a valuable and grossly under-used element in the porno genre. But often, when it is used, the erotic element is lost because it is a self-conscious humor that distracts from the intimacy.

I think I'll mention my film A Quickie here. It's a satire on pornography, yet it has been called pornographic itself. If anybody finds it erotic I'm sure the eroticism is secondary to the humor, yet this brings up a good point: Humor, like eroticism, is not merely graphic. When it occurs in pornography it is incidental to the pornography, yet it has a very therapeutic relationship to sexuality, in that humor (satire in particular) can clear the air of a lot of basically dishonest precepts and leave a space for

more interesting and exciting things to happen.

And finally, to answer to some degree of subjective satisfaction my original query, and for a quick reference in the future: If you get off on it, and it's not graphically depicted, it's not pornography. If you get off on it, and it *is* graphically depicted, it's pornography. In either case, if you get off on it it's erotic, and if you don't it's not.

Dirk Kortz

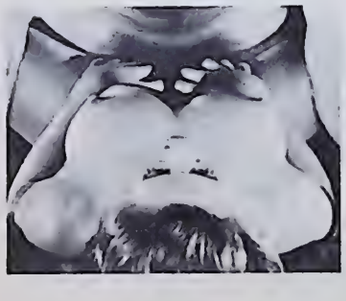
P.O.V. Broad

It looks like I'm just a dirty old lady, because I don't dislike porny films, although I have to admit I liked them better before I saw so many of them. I guess this makes me a pretty poor sample of feminism, because sure as hell those films are exploitative and mechanical and even degrading, but they still get me hot. In fact, I seem to enjoy them more than guys do. The guys I live with tell me the best they get is flaccid semi-erection, whereas there's no question but that my undies are moist after three hours of smut and filth. On the other hand, they could be lying. Too bad I didn't think to reach over and check their veracity during the films, but anyway, my doing so might have altered the result, a phenomenon known in science as the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle.

The first hard-core flick I saw was **Deep Throat**. I discovered I dug penetration shots. All the times I've Done It, I never got to see just what was happening. Fascinating, really. What do cunts look like in the middle of a fuck? I suddenly realized I had a vast well of unrealized curiosity. But **Deep Throat** was flawed, for me: too much sucking and not enough fucking. I guess all that oral action turns on the male viewer; he can *identify* with it better than I can. To me, sucking cock is boring whether I'm watching it or doing it; I'm seldom in the mood for such an extreme of penis-worship, although I found **Throat** technically instructive.

Sex films don't *have* to be shot from a purely male viewpoint, ya know — there were plenty of women in every audience, and, in fact, a genuinely erotic film can appeal to *all* the sexes. At the San Francisco Erotic Film Festival a couple of years ago, there were a lot of highly esthetic-type feelthy pictures (James Broughton, *et al*). I went only one night, to catch the showing of a buddy's sex-flick (which turned out pretty boring, I'm sorry to say). On the same bill, though, they showed Scott Bartlett's **Lovemaking**, and wowie zowie, that was terrific! It's just a couple making love, but it's all very vague and indistinct, shot through a curtain of water, all liquid and dissolving like a fine fuck feels when you give over to it entirely. If I'd've had the guts to reach down and feel around for just a few seconds, I'd've come for sure. (In fact, the worst thing about sex-flicks is that when they're good, you get hot enough you're just on the verge but who's got the courage to masturbate in a theatre full of strangers?)

Brief and casual.



You get hot enough, but who's got the courage in a theater full of strangers.

Which bring us to **The Resurrection of Eve**. It goes right along with Dr. Mary Jane Sherfey's theory that woman's sex drive unleashed is stronger than man's. Hubby reduces Eve to tears when she cops out of a swingers' party. "I'll try to do better next time," babbles baby, bawling instead of balling. As it turns out, papa only knows half-best — it hasn't occurred to him that Eve might like swinging better than she likes *him*. Superficially, **Eve** plays around with Women's Lib, but in a manner so chic and brainless that it's insulting: Eve's break from monogamy transforms her into nothing more than the ideal swinger, an exquisite fuck-machine pursuing sexual relations exempt from personal relations. Another problem with the film is that the sex is uninteresting — the sequences are brief and casual, and there's no build. Most of it's in missionary position, too, and again there's too much sucking for my taste.

On the same bill was **Behind the Green Door**, an earlier Chambers film. It's more overtly reactionary in plot, but at least the first third of the flick is one long build to one long fuck. If art imitates sex (slow build, climax, denouement, aftermath) then sex-art should imitate sex, too, right? The flick blows it less than halfway through, frittering away its energies in lackadaisical group-action, but at least there's that one good sequence leading up to the heroine's supposed orgasm. Unfortunately, Chambers' style of orgasm changes drastically between the two films, so that one suspects that the director of **Eve** taught her how to have a climax. And, frankly, I find it a bit difficult to identify with what is all too obviously a *phony* orgasm. What could be more patriarchal than a pretended climax?

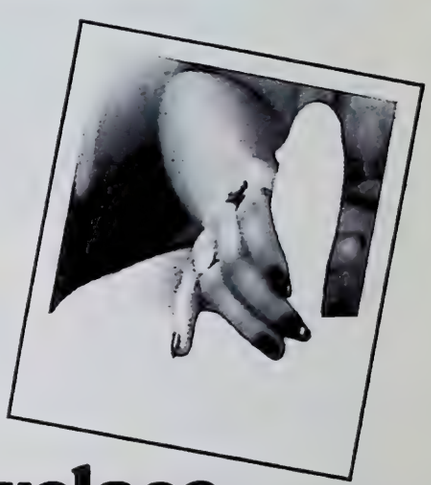
The last two porn films I saw were even worse in this respect. Both **Bad Barbara** and **Deep Sleep** show sex every which way, but the emphasis is all on the male orgasm — I guess so that the male viewer can go with it and maybe cream in his pants. Apparently it's standard porny shtick for the guy to pull out when he's coming and fountain all over the place, sploosh, but the only time the women are shown coming (in these two flicks, at least) is in the masturbation sequences. (Is this significant?) Well, I think this is a little weird, considering that in real life, most guys I've balled seem to feel short-changed unless I visibly and aurally Get Off. But it seems that porn flicks represent a relief from the social responsibility of pleasing the ladies, because apparently it doesn't matter that the actresses are too busy with the technical problems of making the shots work out to show any real arousal.

Anyway, my favorite sequence in **Bad Barbara** is when the hippie dude she's balling fails to pull out in time to do the waterspout number, and suddenly in the middle of a penetration close-up his come starts oozing out of her cunt. I dug that because it was true to life and reminded me very much of screwing. There's another nice sequence, with two guys making it with Barbara at the same time, and boy, could I identify with *that*. Plus an additional three-way sequence, this time F-M-F, where the other woman is so relaxed and natural and *smiling* that it reminded me how mechanical the sex in the rest of the film was. There's also the usual complement of sucking, but at least in **Barbara** it goes both ways. Alas, the plot ultimately cops out of all its lib pretenses — Barbie finally longs for monogamy and can't get none. The inevitable bad end to which promiscuous women must come.

On the same bill was **Deep Sleep**, which was very funny — a lot of camp humor and even some neat, pointed satire. It was so amusing, in fact, that I couldn't take it seriously on a sexual level. Also, there was that same old predominance of prick shots. Hell, I've seen pricks, I've seen more pricks than I can remember, anybody can see them because they're pretty damn obvious. They're OK, you understand, but they're not exactly mysterious. In general, I expected more spread shots of cunts, you know, the forbidden interior of the holy temple — I always thought (before I saw all these dirty pitchas) that cunts were what stag films were about, so that all the guys who'd never seen any cunts close-up could be rescued from their slough of ignorance. But no, it's mostly pricks — sucked pricks, fucked pricks, dripping pricks, spouting pricks, big ones, little ones, pink ones, brown ones — it's not that I don't like pricks, but all this prick-worship does grow cloying, it does.

Mobile Lil

Shy and reserved... and fatuous and self-inflating.



Book Review: Inside Linda Lovelace

Difficult to trash such crap without seeming priggish. Lovelace's ostensible libertarianism is really reactionary pornographic monism. "My God is now sex. Without sex I'd die. Sex is everything. My plaid school skirts... have long been burned, my only uniform now is a sleek, adult body, shaved of all hair and ready for eager action."

<u>Deep Throat</u> ugly gray degrading commodity spectacle. Deep Throat is not sex, it is advertising for sex, it steals the soul of sex, it is exhibitionism, narcissism, voyeurism, cynicism, vanity for profit. Less healthy stimulant to improved relations than passive substitute for unavailable fulfillment.

Erotic art — <u>History of the Blue Movie, Green Door, Devil in Miss Jones</u> — expanding, tasteful, sexy, intriguing, informative. Deep Throat deeply insulting, deeply useless.

Lovelace autoblog a pathetic, narrow absurdity. Hypnotized, and trained by boyfriend to perform sex tricks. Carry vibrator in pussy to supermarket, swallow entire foot in pussy, mother-daughter carnal sandwich, two cocks in ass, double dildoes, ad infinitum.

Lovelace claims she is shy and reserved in private life. "I've done some freaky things in public that may contradict this, but that's usually because I've been with someone who brings me out of my shell. I have to be led." (emphasis added).

Basic issue not whether porno should be censored, whether porno is sick, whether Lovelace is liberated or ludicrous. Basic issue is subjectivity. General desire for rich free sex impossible to fulfill in linear authoritarian society. Bad profiteering fuck films flood downtown with images of insincere love, alienated sex labor, do nothing to increase spectators' potential for understanding, participation or rebellion.

Of course, as a swinger, Lovelace mouths the standard Playboy philosophies: smoke pot, Nixon is sexually

uptight, OK for kids to fuck, masturbation is natural, more money should be spent on clean air than on fighting porno, etc. Carried to extreme — depersonalization turned into pragmatism: "Too bad pussy eating isn't taught in junior high as a required course... it could very possibly keep some marriages together. For a wife who has lost her charm, it might be difficult for her mate to keep up with regular fucking, but if he wants to keep the marriage going, and wants the shirts to be washed and ironed, he would do well to bone up on his technique."

Overall context is fatuous and self-inflating. "If you haven't already heard, I was the star of Deep Throat, the most successful sex film ever made. This movie, and my performance in it, could very well influence the entire future of filmmaking... I know this sounds like bragging, which isn't like me at all, but I am proud of what I've done. I feel like a kind of pioneer who explored a strange and forbidden territory, and emerged in total victory. I did what other girls were afraid to do, and as a result I am about to become one of the most famous film personalities of our time."

Question may be raised: Is frail male reviewer threatened by Linda's gargantuan sexuality? A possibility, but reviewer's main response is shudder at sex-zombie tone of Linda's investigations. To render sex mechanical is not a positive demystification of hushed-up inhibited conventions. Lovelace and her films represent commercialism, opportunism and objectification to a most profound degree.

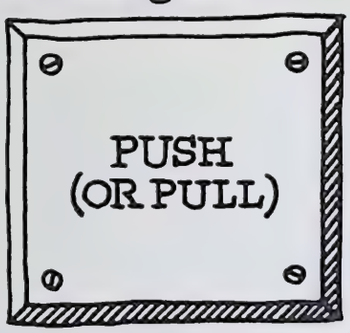
Mike Shedlin

Out of the closets and into the Bijous

Gay Liberation's official position on pornography is pretty cut and dried, and surprisingly prudish: Gays are not supposed to enjoy porno, and to patronize book stores and theatres offering such fare is to support exploitation of gays by what Carl Wittman of the *San Francisco Free Press* called "parasites who flourish in the ghetto." So when a liberation tabloid film critic like *Gay Sunshine*'s Lee Atwell condescends to review some currently popular prick flicks, he prefaces his remarks with a foregone conclusion that, "they must be marginally instructive to some and provide vicarious fantasy for those unable to compete in the sexual marketplace."

Such a position is snobbish and elitist, not to mention misguided — like much liberation thinking, it suggests that its proponent can't see the forest for the trees. In the first place, even liberationists admit that "legitimate" commercial cinema offers gays no viable alternatives. We're spoon-fed the vapid puerility of a **Gay Deceivers**, or the self-contempt of a **Boys in the Band**, or the tasteless camp of a **Some of My Best Friends Are...**, all served up by Hollywood in the name of "entertainment." Worse still is the rare TV fling at portraying gays and gay lifestyles, such as the Levinson-Link production of **That Certain Summer**; these always bog down in agonizing apologetics that can only reinforce the old stereotypes and allow straights the emotion of pity, which is more contemptible than hatred. From Cocteau's preface to *The White Paper*: "I'm not willing just to be tolerated. That wounds my love of love and of liberty."

Aren't *all* porno pictures "marginally instructive"? — more so or less depending on the degree of one's sexual sophistication, experience, attitudes, etc. After all, moviegoers are voyeurs: our myths, dreams, and fantasies are the stuff of which movies are made. The film screen is a window through which an audience of peeping toms watches the vicarious play of its collective subconsciousness. And the movie screen is also a mirror in that, as Parker Tyler once noted, "the constant factor of projection (is) common to both mind and film." If we do not see what we like or want to see "up there," we usually project that something into what we *do* see.



Most gay porno superstars perform in straight porno films as well.

Even straight porno has probably brought more "latent" gays out of their closets than all of the combined Gay Day Parades, consciousness-raising rap sessions, public confessions by Famous Authors, and seductions by dirty old men. If watching something erotic produces in the viewer a physical reaction as conclusive as an erection, that viewer cannot for long deny his inclinations, however repressed. Anyone who thinks he might *be* homosexual, yet fears he has something to protect, would be well advised to seriously and honestly examine his response to porno the next time he sees it. To ask, "Am I aroused by the female or the male performer, and why?"

I am reminded of a perfect illustration: Richard B. spent his entire adolescence and young adulthood denying his homosexuality. During his college years, he met a pornographer who had directed a number of sleazy heterosexual fuck films in Mexico. These were shoddily produced but exceptionally licentious. One afternoon they were watching one of them with a mutual friend, a handsome French Canadian named Paul, on whom Richard had an almost unbearable fixation. Months later, after slamming the closet door behind him for good, Richard said, in retrospect: "I think the two greatest factors in my coming out were marijuana and pornography. The pot broke down my inhibitions and let me see myself as I really was; the porno convinced me that what I secretly wanted was indeed real, easily within reach, and increasingly difficult to deny... Watching that Mexican stag film with Paul, I knew that I was obsessed with him, because I saw his face every time I looked at the guy on the screen." In a very real (if existential) sense, then, porno is highly moral. Again, to quote Cocteau, this time from *Opium*: "The only crime is to be superficial. Everything which is understood is good."

It is particularly interesting and pertinent that the porno in question here was of Mexican origin. Another of the misguided objections to gay porno voiced by the elitist critic is that most of it suffers from being crudely produced and, therefore, aesthetically vulgar. Atwell, for example, contends that "...The aesthetic of these films and the consciousness they represent is very low, generally at the groin level." Well, of course; that's as it should be. If there is an aesthetic of porn, it is an aesthetic of sleaze; that is, the art of porno is the art of vulgarity. Only a basically asexual person can distinguish between the "erotic" and the "obscene." That is why Mexican porno is more carnal (and therefore artful) than, say, Danish porno: the more repressed the sexual climate in which porno is produced, the more erotic the potential of the film.

The word "anesthetic" comes from the ancient Greeks, and means "without feeling." The word "aesthetic," on the other hand, means exactly the opposite: "*with* feeling" or "sensitive." The erotic, wrote Cocteau, "achieves best expression if none but the senses are allowed entry into the picture, the heart being left outside it... The heart is one thing. The sex is another. Certain objects overwhelm the one, certain objects arouse the other; without, in all this, the intelligence playing any part at all." Most Danish porno, especially the gay variety, comes off sterile and anesthetic, no doubt because it is above-board, over-the-counter, sanctioned by the society for which it was intended. No wonder the Danes themselves have become so bored with it!

Yet, despite the slings of outrageous elitist criticism and arrows of governmental buck-passing in the area of censorship, gay porno flourishes in America, and at least two genuine auteurs have emerged. They are Fred Halsted, director of **Sex Garage**, **L.A. Plays Itself**, and **Truck It**; and Wakefield Poole, who made **Boys in the Sand** and **Bijou**. Before them, prick flicks were mostly limited to what Tyler has called films with a "quasi-beaverish quality," roughly the motion picture equivalent of muscle magazines, physique studies, and soft-core beefcake books with campy titles like *Young Naked Champs*.

Halsted's **L.A. Plays Itself** created quite a stir with its graphic depiction of a fist fuck, a peculiar form of pederasty portrayed for the first (and probably last) time on the commercial screen. But his earlier, shorter film, **Sex Garage**, is a more stunning piece of filmmaking, stylistically reminiscent of Kenneth Anger's **Scorpio Rising** and **Kustom Kar Kommandos**. In **Garage**, Halsted glorifies his Muscular Blond Adonis as a Sexual Superman, a pansexual hedon equally responsive with both male *and* female partners, clearly anticipating the day when, as Gore Vidal has put it "homosexual" will refer to something one does rather than something one is. (Most, if not all gay porno superstars, it should be noted, perform in straight porno films as well.) Alas, Halsted's latest work, **Truck It**, is a disappointment; it is a feeble attempt at humor, and as the films of Warhol have shown, humor tends to desexualize the erotic.

Poole's **Boys in the Sand** is an evocation of the fantasy life of a Fire Island gay, handsomely played by Casey Donovan, who bears a remarkable resemblance to Robert Redford, except that he has a better physique. Donovan's status as a superstar is so great that gays have been flocking to see him in **Fun and Games**, a straight porn picture in which he acts under the name Cal Culver. In **Boys in the Sand**, there is an astonishingly erotic sequence in which Donovan imagines himself to be getting it on with a black telephone lineman. The film is marred only by Poole's penchant for suggesting that such incredible sex is limited to a gay's daydreams, a theme which runs through all his work to date.

The fantasy motif is even more integral to **Bijou**, which can be seen as a homage to Cocteau and Eisenstein. In it, a young construction worker witnesses an accident in which a young girl (Eurydice?) is struck by an automobile. He steals her purse, in which he finds a ticket for the "Bijou," which turns out to be a maze-like fun house, an underworld into which the young Orpheus follows Eurydice. (The girl appears briefly, fleetingly, in some film projections on the screens of the Bijou, surely a symbolic wedding of fantasy and reality, which is what happens in movie theatres everywhere.) The reddish-gold and blue-green hues of the banquet scene from Eisenstein's **Ivan the Terrible, Part II** are duplicated by Poole in **Bijou**'s orgy sequence, with the colored objects photographed against black backgrounds for depth, in a manner similar to the Russian filmmaker.

Unfortunately, this latter sequence is the film's weakest and most embarrassingly pretentious, what with Colt Studio (muscleman) types feigning ecstasy to the strains of what sounds like Wagner or Scriabin or Resphigi. Not surprisingly, critic Atwell hails the sequence for a "balletic grace and sensual purity entirely missing in the hard core genre," while he condemns the technical execution of **Boys in the Sand** for being "largely on the level of second rate home movies." Precisely. What could be closer to reality than home movies? The best porno is the home movie we wish we could be filming, rather than Aunt Myrtle and Uncle Fred's wedding anniversary.

Jim Martin

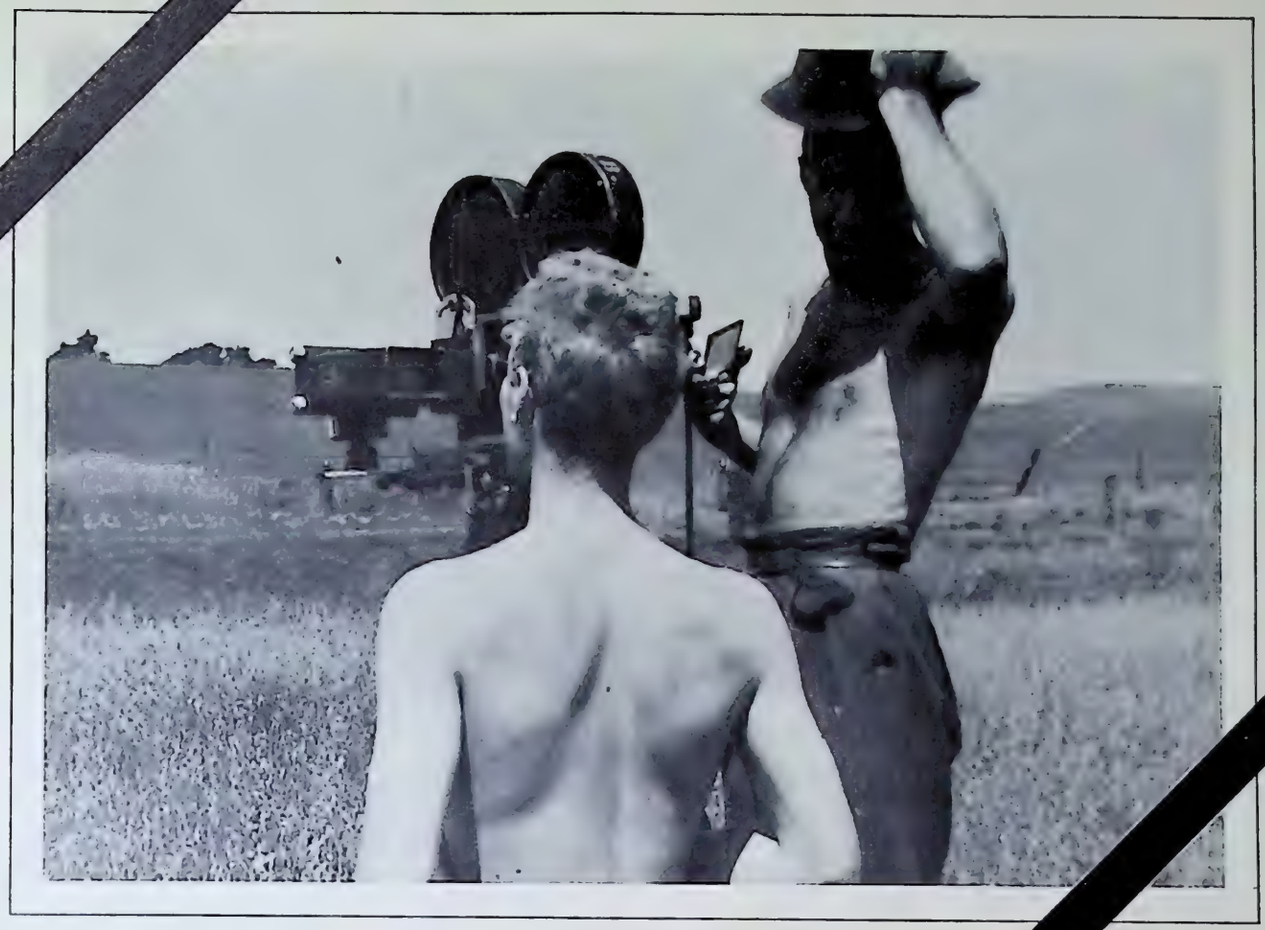
Jon Carroll, former editor of Oui and, before that, an editor for West Rags and Rolling Stone, is now a freelance writer living in Berkeley.

Dirk Kortz is a filmmaker, poet and freelance writer living in San Francisco. His films have won awards in many festivals throughout the country, including Atlanta, the New York International Student Film Festival, and the First International Erotic Film Festival in San Francisco.

Mobile Lil, the dancing witch, used to be Marrakesh Lil before she moved.

Mike Shedlin was written for Film Quarterly and Rolling Stone. He interviewed Haskell Wexler in our Vol. 3 No. 6.

Jim Martin is a freelance journalist, critic and screenwriter based in Los Angeles.



1943. Sol Dworkin on left,
Grant Crabtree on right, shooting a farm film, ***Farm Front.***
This minimum crew of a director and a
cameraman, plus an assistant,
was typical of the way films were made.

LIFE AT THE EARLY NFB

BY SOL DWORKIN

When I started working at the National Film Board of Canada in March 1943, the right to hire all new production people was reserved to John Grierson, the Film Commissioner. But he didn't hire me. He saw me for the first time after I had been working there almost three weeks. Grierson came into the editing room where I was working, asked my name, who had hired me, then grunted and left as if to say, "We shall see about your type." Though I had little face-to-face contact with him at work, I — like other young filmmakers at the NFB — felt his influence through our producer-supervisors, and we saw and heard a great deal of him at the NFB parties which seemed to be a constant diversion during the War Years.

Perhaps John Grierson would never have hired me, because he seemed to be searching for the liberally-educated, intellectual types, and I was a graduate in science from the Ontario Agricultural College; not then known as a hot-bed of intellectualism. But, probably exactly because I was a science graduate from an Agricultural College, I was finally hired and was able to quickly fit into the NFB's needs. This is the way it happened: I was working in a lab at the National Research Council, down the street from the National Film Board, on Sussex Street in Ottawa. A friend of mine, Peter Nichols, who ran a lunch counter across from the NFB, suggested that I try and get a job at the Board because I seemed more interested in photography and art than in science. He introduced me to Evelyn Cherry, a producer and Canada's first woman documentary filmmaker, who then spoke about me to Stuart Legg, who happened to be in charge while Grierson was away on one of his many long trips. Legg was the producer of **World in Action** and known for his part in the British documentary, **Night Mail**, which was a lot more important at that time than it is today. Legg was not remotely interested in even speaking to me, but I was persistent and would not be put off, so I kept calling him regularly, hoping to get an interview. One day, Legg was away on a trip, leaving Raymond Spottiswoode in charge, an Englishman, like Legg, who was very interested in science. He agreed to interview me. He liked my idealistic ideas of making films about science for the citizen and hired me on the spot. I took a cut in pay from the $109 per month

Sol Dworkin is now a teacher of filmmaking at Seneca College in the suburbs of Toronto, where he has been five years. Before that, he spent 23 years in the USA, producing short films and teaching filmmaking at universities and in industry. Like other filmmakers with his length of experience, he has won a number of awards and recognitions. He holds a BSA from U. of Toronto, an M.S. in Ed. from Indiana U. and a Ph. D. (Educ) from Syracuse U.

I was earning at the National Research Council, to $105 a month at the NFB. Even in those days it was just barely enough to live on.

When I reported for work on March 20, 1943 no one was expecting me, including the producer Dallas Jones to whom I was assigned. He had little time for me because he was just about to leave for location, so he asked a young filmmaker, Ernie Reid, to show me the ropes. Jones then gave me an assignment to find some stock shots and left; as far as I was concerned — out of my life. Ernie showed me how to use a viewer, how to splice 35mm film and how to find my way around the stock shot library. I learned the difference between lavender and positive prints, how to paper a negative, who would give me the time of day and answer questions, and sort of struggled along for a few weeks wondering what kind of an unstructured outfit I had wandered into.

But this did not last long because of an NFB phenomenon; the various circuits and their associated newsreels. The circuits were part of the war effort; a distribution system whereby an NFB projectionist stopped in a community once a month on a regular circuit and showed a film program. There were three circuits; Rural, Industrial and Trade Union. Depending on the circuit, the shows were held in schools, halls, churches, libraries, and factories. Each program usually consisted of a two-reel feature with subject-matter appropriate to the particular audience, a one-reel theatrical item such as one of the monthly **Canada Carries On** series, plus the newsreel. The newsreel was pieced together from foreign newsreels, usually about the war, and from original film shot by NFB filmmakers.

The newsreels were used as a training ground for the newcomers to production. Putting together a monthly newsreel was a thankless job because of its low priority and lack of recognition. But it was a wonderful way to learn film production and, particularly, editing. I was assigned the job of producing the newsreel. In this way, I was able to study the editing techniques of European newsreel editors and I learned how to get along at the NFB in order to meet deadlines.

The newsreels did not run during the summer months and in 1943 — about three months after I had started my job — I was given my first film. There was a shortage of filmmakers that summer and a great need for agricultural films. Except for Evelyn Cherry and her director-cameraman husband, Lawrence, there was no one to do them. Jim Beveridge, who was Production Secretary, suggested that I make a film for which the script had already been prepared. Because no cameramen were available that summer among NFB employees, we hired one from Budge Crawley. Budge, at the time, was an accountant who had a small film business going on the side which he ran out of the third floor of his mother's home. He seemed to be dependent on the film jobs John Grierson gave him and specialized in 16mm Kodachrome. Since the Board did not have production facilities for 16mm, his operation served a useful purpose.

The cameraman we hired from Budge was Grant Crabtree, a very good photographer who literally saved me on my first film. He not only knew 35mm black-and-white camerawork, but he knew how to shoot for cutting, a rare quality for a cameraman. He was also very philosophical about new NFB directors like myself who had little experience but a big job to do. Thus, the three of us (Grant, his fledgling and useless assistant and I) hit the road in a rented car and shot a two-reel, 35mm black-and-white film called **Farm Front**. The budget was fifteen thousand dollars of NFB money which, translated into today's terms, would be at least fifty thousand dollars. As director, with my three months of film experience, I was in complete charge of the production. There were trials and tribulations aplenty in the production of this film, but with good guidance from Jim Beveridge coupled to my utter naïveté concerning what I should or should not do, the film turned out to be a success. It received compliments from John Grierson and Arthur Elton, who was visiting, and I was recognized as a potential Canadian filmmaker.

Making a film with a healthy budget, after only three months' experience in filmmaking, was not really unusual at the NFB in 1943. There were many opportunities if you were willing to work hard and had some talent. I can imagine, now, that politics had much to do with the availability of opportunities, but that only applied to the major productions; we beginners, who did the basic films on which the NFB depended, didn't have to worry too much about politics. Encouragement came from people like Jim Beveridge. He, of course, was a young filmmaker himself but had come to the Film Board when it first began and, now, three years later was already a veteran and Production Secretary. He believed in the necessity for training Canadians because the war would be over some day and the British and Americans at the Board would most likely go home or to greener pastures. But not all producers were as generous as Jim Beveridge. Most of them were hustling around building their own careers and gaining experience in preparation for the time when the war would end.

There was no doubt that the British filmmakers were the back-bone of the NFB at the time. Canadians depended on them for their training. I — for example — ended up working for an English documentarian, Stanley Hawes, who had come up the hard way through the English studios, sweeping floors in order to get his chance. Other English filmmakers had got their start out of Oxford or Cambridge by going right into the editing rooms and beginning their careers. I don't know what the essential differences were between the two types of filmmakers, but Stanley Hawes was well organized, creative, thoughtful and a perfectionist. I don't think there was any phase of filmmaking that he did not know. Hawes did not approve of my quick road to success and when I went to work for him he made me start at the bottom again, on the splicer. At the time I was unhappy but in later years, when I was absolutely on my own and making films in universities and businesses where I was the only filmmaker, I found that I had acquired a fundamental knowledge of filmmaking which was thorough and professional.

Although the British filmmakers were the backbone of the Board there were also some Americans there. They were filmmakers of a different sort and some of them, true to their stereotype, provided more flare to their films. There were a few Canadian filmmakers too, such as the Cherrys, trained in England; Margaret Perry from the Maritimes, the first camerawoman I knew; some people trained in tourist films; and the left-overs from the old Canadian Motion Picture Bureau who seemed to have been relegated to technician rank because they were not up to competing with the new breed of filmmaker.

There was also a steady stream of visiting firemen. It seemed that the NFB was a temporary haven for European documentary filmmakers on their way from Europe to the USA. Few of them stayed for long in Ottawa, but among the luminaries were Joris Ivens from Holland, Boris Kaufman from France, Joe Braun from France, and Basil Wright and Arthur Elton from England. There were a lot more but the NFB was a busy place and many of us were out on location about half the time and did not get the opportunity to meet them. At times these visitors contributed to the over-all atmosphere of the place by presenting us with a talk or two on Friday nights. But I don't think that, except for a favoured few, their presence had much of an influence on the Canadian filmmakers.

On Friday nights, films were shown for the staff and a few invited guests. The NFB theatre was very small but it had dual 35mm projectors, a single 16mm projector and a fairly good sound system. It was the same space we used for recording and mixing. On Friday nights this small theatre was really exciting, for John Grierson would be there along with senior producers like Stuart Legg and Stanley Hawes and any visiting firemen who happened to be around. The screenings consisted of recently-produced NFB films which would be critiqued after the screening. Some mortal blows were delivered on those Friday nights, plus the occasional accolade which convinced some of us that we would like to be filmmakers for the rest of our lives.

There isn't any doubt that the Film Board staff was a talented, dedicated group of people. The facilities, though, were another story. They were primitive compared to what is now considered adequate. The main building was located on Sussex Street opposite the French Legation and overlooking the Ottawa River.

If you stood on a chair or were seven feet tall you could see the Ottawa River from the production office and see where the Gatineau River joined it on the Quebec side. So the location was beautiful, but the building itself was an old sawmill which we shared with the Department of Health. This national film production facility did not even have a studio and when an insert had to be shot the small theatre would be used, disrupting sound mixing and projection schedules.

On the first floor of the two-story building were the processing laboratory (forbidden territory to production people), the negative-cutting room where the girls worked, the optical effects camera, the small theatre and recording facility and some business offices. On the second floor were production offices (shared by many and as noisy as a news room), editing rooms, an animation camera and art rooms, a music and effects department and the offices of John Grierson and the Deputy Film Commissioner.

The organization was divided into departments according to function. In general there was cooperation between groups, but certainly not always. The dominant department was Production, with as many as thirteen units each headed by a Producer and staffed with one or two directors who usually did their own writing and editing. On the technical and service side were the Camera Department and Processing Laboratory. There was some friction between the laboratory and production as it was not unusual for negatives and sound tracks to be ruined in developing and the service was terrible. The best service was received by the production units with the most power; nice guys came last.

The Camera Department was downtown and I am sure that many of the production people never saw it or even knew where it was. To many producers, the cameraman was a necessary evil to be tolerated until the shooting was complete, but never to be really involved in the film subject. Many cameramen looked on the production staff as a group of irresponsible, incompetent oddballs who didn't know which side was up. In some very rare cases, including my own, a director acted as his own cameraman, a practice frowned on by cameramen. But they could do nothing about it since there weren't any unions at the NFB.

The Music Cutting Department was part of production and run by Eugene Kash who was very considerate of the younger filmmakers. At the time the resident composers were Maurice Blackburn and Louis Applebaum. The skills of the top music cutters and the composers were alloted to filmmakers who were part of the in-group and the less important filmmakers had to make do with music from the library. Looking back, it is a mystery to me how the music department managed in their tiny editing room.

The Animation Department under Norman MacLaren was also part of Production and even then their work was receiving more notice than that of other sections of the Board. But they were a group apart and the only way a filmmaker would get involved with them was for titles or an animation insert for a film.

The Film Board had a large Distribution Department. When I first started at the NFB there seemed to be a tremendous rift between production and distribution. The latter felt that they knew what the various publics should see and what they liked, while the production people were determined to maintain their artistic integrity and not allow distribution people to tell them how to make films. The solution to this dilemma seems to have been that Production made films the way they felt they should be made and Distribution settled for what they got.

So, that's a rough sketch of the National Film Board under Grierson. Obviously my impressions are based on the limited experience of one young filmmaker during three-and-a-half years working there. But those were probably the most important years, because they established the National Film Board as an important national and international agency for the production and distribution of films. Grierson proved that, given the budget and a group of Canadians with direction, a government agency was capable of reaching great heights in a very competitive field, as well as becoming an excellent training ground for Canadian filmmakers to serve their own country and also to go to the corners of the earth, producing short films and training still others in their production.

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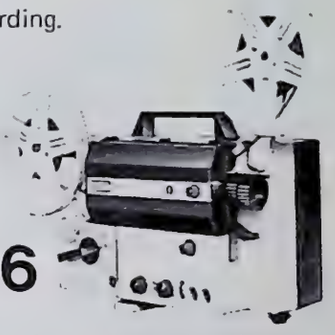

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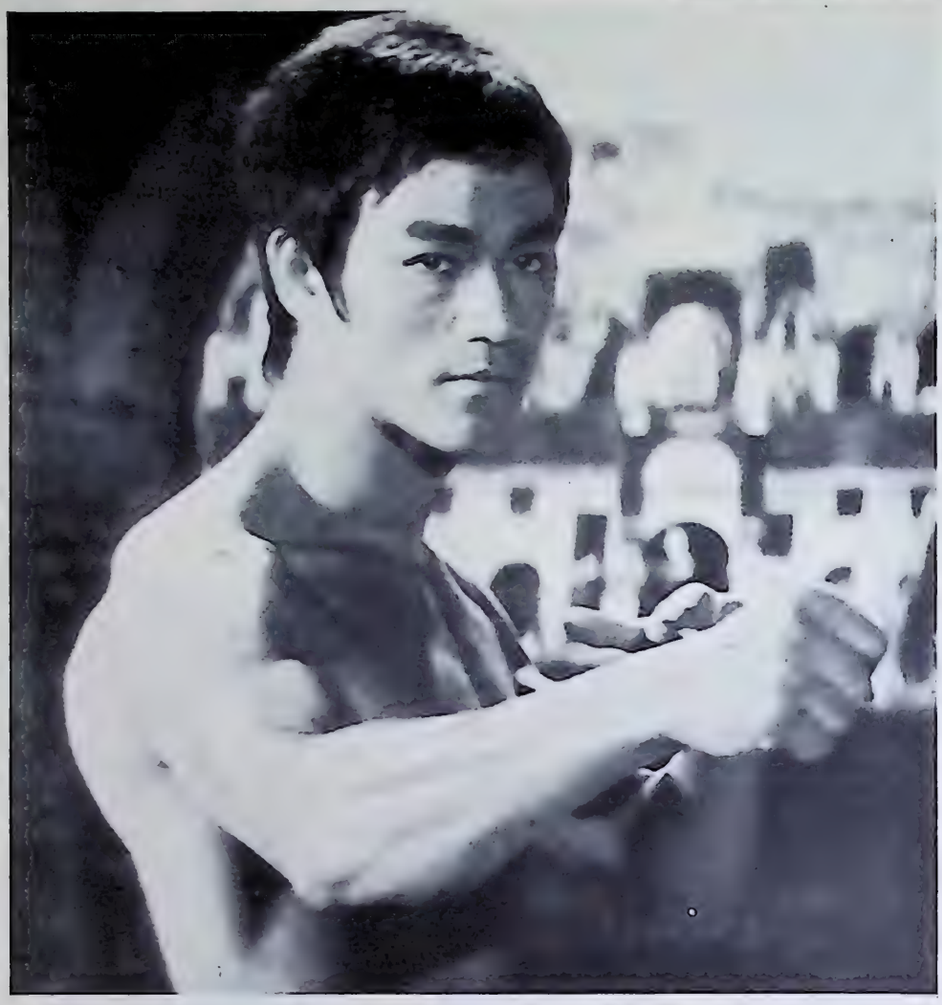

ENTER THE DRAGON

Bruce Lee lives!

First off, you'll be pleased to learn that **Return of the Dragon** has nothing in common with the noxious **Enter the Dragon** except the presence of Bruce Lee. **Enter the Dragon** is an American movie of minimal accomplishment: it looks like a tatty remake of the island fortress scenes from **You Only Live Twice**, and plays like it was scripted by the CIA. **Return of the Dragon** (known to the rest of the world as **Way of the Dragon**) was made earlier, and is a Chinese movie shot entirely on location in Rome: it looks and behaves like Lee's first two Mandarin successes, **The Big Boss (Fists of Fury)** and **Fist of Fury (The Chinese Connection).**

Next, some background. By 1972, Lee had effectively smashed open the Hong Kong production systems — and made more than a few enemies at executive level — by demanding, and getting, higher fees and better working conditions. Creative control of his projects was the obvious next step (though he was far from the first action star to start directing; the equally remarkable Wang Yu had done so at least six years earlier). Lee founded his own production company — Concord — and immediately began work on writing and planning his next picture. He chose the Italian setting largely because martial arts exploiters were so popular there (49 of them were released in 1973 alone, almost one a week)... a fact that merely reflects innate similarities in the popular cinemas of the two markets. Italy and the Far East still enjoy huge audiences for genre movies, invariably in colour and scope, because their tv is still relatively underdeveloped; Shaw Brothers released almost every Italian actioner ever made in the Far East, and martial arts movies owe clear debts to the Italian western.

Et enfin, the movie itself. The plot is a straight re-run of **The Big Boss** on a larger scale: affable Chinese hick Tang arrives in Rome to help family friend Chen Ching Hua protect her restaurant from gangsters who are trying to force her to sell up. Revealing himself a master martial artist, Tang counters the gang-

Maybe this is the place to add a coupla footnotes to the pieces on Lee and martial arts movies that have lately graced these pages.

Phil Ochs' generous tribute to Lee is short of the fact that a fifth Bruce Lee feature was in progress at the time of his death. **The Game of Death**'s fight scenes had been completed, and two can be seen in the wretched Golden Harvest compilation **Bruce Lee: Man and Legend**, including one extraordinary bout with a negro giant. The July '74 issue of *Golden Movie News* carries one or two stills, and the news that the company are investigating plans to release the footage in some form. (The compilation — which begins with two reels on the symbolic funeral in HK, and ends with another reel on the actual funeral in Hollywood — also incidentally features a clip from **My Son Ah Chiang**, the movie in which Lee starred at the age of nine.)

Richard Hyatt — author of the "Introduction to Gung Fu Movies" published last December — is either dumb or ignorant or wilfully misleading. Many, or even most, martial arts movies have a lot going for them besides their action: apart from the psychological/dramatic qualities that define any particular genre, they're rich in reflections on Chinese history and culture, the national character and investigations of the nature of heroism. They're also fascinating for the rhetoric of their visual style (much like Italian westerns), and for the fluidity of exposition sequences (which are obviously edited in camera, with a new set-up for every shot) — all of which is especially exhilarating when compared with current Hollywood stagnation. Follow Hyatt's advice about Shaw Brothers movies, and you'll miss Chang Cheh's near-masterpiece of myth-making, **Golden Swallow**, and the same director's distinctive vehicles for David Chiang and Ti Lung (troubled variations on the theme of heroism in unheroic times), not to mention Chu Yuan's **Intimate Confessions of a Chinese Courtesan** (a perfect Z-movie **Scarlet Empress**) and dozens of others. Hyatt's right, though, about catching the movies in Chinese theatres, with subtitles. If you do, you might find yourself discovering the considerable delights of other Chinese genres too: comedies, dramas, social comment pictures, the whole range.

Tony Rayns

Tony Rayns is a London writer and critic. His film reviews appear regularly in the BFI Monthly Film Bulletin.

sters' every move, and the despairing gang boss eventually hires the services of three champion fighters as heavies. Tang uncovers a traitor in the Chinese ranks, defeats the heavies, leaves the boss in the hands of the police, attends the necessary funerals and goes his lonely way.

As director, Lee falls into most of the errors common in first features. Pace and tone are continually misjudged, the plotting is repetitive and sometimes awkwardly contrived, and the all-round ingenuousness is frequently more embarrassing than charming. The location possibilities are squandered in tedious travelogue sequences; even the Coliseum — setting for the final bout with Chuck Norris — is used more for its associations than for its spatial dynamics. Many of the problems seem to spring from the tactic of transplanting a generically Chinese plot to Europe: the gang boss's escalation of violence against Tang almost works as hyperbole until he himself nearly downs the hero with a single, ill-aimed gunshot.

As star, however, the Little Dragon is more graceful than ever. The movie brims with minor surprises and idiosyncrasies that make it amongst the most personal to have emerged from Hong Kong. For a good half of the movie Tang's fighting skills are kept in abeyance while the character is played for laughs. He's nonplussed by an elderly woman's penetrating stare at Rome airport, confounded by the mysteries of Western menus, money and lavatory bowls, and clumsy in adjusting to European manners. He's on familiar ground in the back streets ("Our slums are just like this"), but unimpressed by the tourist sights ("I'd build on it and make a lot of money"). Much of this — including a gross interlude with a predatory female — is quintessential Chinese popular comedy, and Lee's broad playing is as engaging as in the 'telephone repair' sequence in **Fist of Fury**. Lee cunningly extends the effect of these scenes of social gracelessness by using them to throw the character of Tang back on to himself, to lead into the developing strain of narcissism that in turn paves the way for the serious fighting rituals of the climax. From the point that Tang finds his niche in the action, he comes into his own: alone, he's ineffably self-assured (the near-onanistic scene showing his morning exercises); in company, he's an object of solid admiration (from friends and enemies alike, including the villains' extravagantly camp menial, Ho); in action, he's simply incomparable.

The relative sparsity of fight scenes (I write as a benighted Londoner who's been protected from eight minutes of the film by the British censor, but even so the volume of fights to the square foot of screen is way under average for the genre) throws all the more weight on to the climactic scrap with Norris. This, staged with the same part-earnest, part-jokey solemn intensity as a Leone gunfight, is the movie's long-awaited rabble rouser, and it seems likely to stand as Lee's testament. It's unique in achieving a balance between the star's unconventional skills (the legendary whirling treble-whammy, the aural accompaniment of screeches, barks and wails) and a real sense of the *form* of the thing (mutual respect between opponents, deliberate give-and-take in the manoeuvring, even a moment or two of reverence for the loser's body). It also boasts terrific detail: Lee staggering back from a clinch with a handful of hair from Norris' chest, a wide-eyed kitten adjudicating from the shadows. In fact it's Lee's best, representing the height of both his personal convictions and his imaginative efforts. How many of the other scenes and motifs carry an autobiographical charge is a matter for conjecture (the struggle to be taken seriously? the problem with inquisitive strangers in public? the self-sufficiency? irritation from enraptured fags?), but the climax certainly consolidates everything else in the movie, mistakes and all. The unsympathetic probably won't see anything here but the flaws; those who already know will find something that they can't get anywhere else.

Tony Rayns

Credits for films reviewed

Harry & Tonto
A Twentieth Century-Fox release of their own production. Producer and Director: Paul Mazursky. Screenplay: Mazursky and Josh Greenfeld. Photography: Michael Butler. Art Director: Ted Haworth. Editor: Richard Halsey. Cast: Art Carney, Ellen Burstyn, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Larry Hagman, Chief Dan George. Panavision. Color by De Luxe.

The Night Porter
A United Artists Release. Producers: Robert Gordon Edwards and Esa de Simone. Director: Liliana Cavani. Screenplay: Liliana Cavani and Italo Moscati. Photography: Alfio Contini. Music: Daniele Paris. Editor: Franco Arcalli. Cast: Dirk Bogarde, Charlotte Rampling, Philippe Leroy, Gabriele Ferzetti. Isa Miranda. Technicolor. 115 min.

The Holy Mountain
An Abkco Films release. Director, Writer and Editor: Alexandro Jodorowsky. Photography: Miguel Garzon and Harry Cohn. Cast: Jodorowsky, Horacio Salinas, Ramona Saunders, Juan Ferrara, Adriana Page, Burt Kleiner, Valerie Jodorowsky. TechniScope and Technicolor.

Wedding in Blood
A New Line Cinema release of a Les Films la Boetie (Paris) — Canaria Films (Rome) co-production. Director & Screenplay: Claude Chabrol. Photography: Jean Rabier. Music: Pierre Jansen. Cast: Stephane Audran, Michel Piccoli, Claude Pieplu, Clothilde Joano, Eliana de Santis. 98 mins.

That's Entertainment
A United Artists release of an MGM production. Producer, Director and Screenplay: Jack Haley, Jr. Executive Producer: Daniel Melnick. Editor: Bud Friedkin, *et al.* Narrated by: Fred Astaire, Bing Crosby, Gene Kelly, Peter Lawford, Liza Minelli, Donald O'Connor, Debbie Reynolds, Mickey Rooney, Frank Sinatra, James Stewart and Elizabeth Taylor. 125 mins.

Return of the Dragon
A Bryanston Pictures release of a ConcordGolden Harvest production. Director & Screenplay: Bruce Lee. Producer: Raymond Chow. Photography: Ho Lan Shan. Editor: Chang Yao Chung. Design: Chien Hsin. Music compiled by Joseph Koo. Martial arts Instructors: Bruce Lee, Chang Tung Tsu. Cast: Bruce Lee, Nora Miao, Chuck Norris, Robert Wall, Whong In Sik, Wei Ping Au, Robert Chan. Technicolor. 99 mins.

The Seduction of Mimi
A New Line Cinema release of a Vera Film production. Director & Screenplay: Lina Wertmuller. Producers: Daniele Senatore and Romano Cardarelli. Photography: Dario Di Palma. Art Director: Enrico Job. Editor: Franco Fraticelli. Music: Piero Piccioni. Cast: Giancarlo Giannini, Mariangela Melato, Turi Ferro, Agostina Belli, Elena Fiore. Eastmancolor. 89 mins.

Bingo
A Films Mutuels release. Director: Jean-Claude Lord. Screenplay: Lord, Lise Thouin, Michel Capistran, Roch Poisson and Jean Salvy. Photography: Claude Larue and Jean-Claude Labrecque. Cast: Réjean Guénette, Anne-Marie Provencher, Claude Michaud, Jean Duceppe, Alexandra Stewart, Willie Lamothe, Pierre Valcourt. 116 mins.

HARRY & TONTO

Mazursky returns

Among contemporary American directors Paul Mazursky occupies a unique place because of his witty, perceptive dissections of personal relationships — the routine crises of marriage, the new strategies of sexual conquest, the tensions within a family. While most filmmakers look for epic subjects or renovate old formula movies by juicing up the violence, Mazursky works in a more intimate, less spectacular, more meaningful arena; he makes episodic, non-plot movies that pay attention to the minutiae of everyday life, the bloodless battles on the domestic front. Irvin Kershner (in parts of **The Luck of Ginger Coffey, Loving,** and **Up the Sandbox**), is another director adept at capturing the nuances of ordinary domestic relationships, but Mazursky is attempting something more ambitious: he wants to examine the ways in which traditional relationships have been transformed by the sexual revolution, the religion of psychoanalysis, and the erosion of the nuclear family unit. At his best, Mazursky charts the hazardous search for personal maturity in a bewildering universe where all the old values have become obsolete.

There has been a subtle change in Mazursky's approach over his first five films. In **I Love You, Alice B. Toklas** (directed by Hy Averback) and **Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice** (his first directorial effort), Mazursky satirized the pretensions of the new breed of affluent, overanalyzed Los Angeles swingers, hoping to recapture their youth by experimenting with hashish fudge, sensitivity training, and creative adultery, group groping their way to liberation. Especially in **Bob & Carol**, Mazursky struck a perfect balance of skepticism and sympathy; he could identify with his characters' goals of freedom and honesty while mocking the imperfect results of their quest, the impurities in their Esalen-tested relationships. But even in that film the point of view was not always entirely clear, and the euphoric conclusion — a joyful Fellini-like parade accompanied by Burt Bacharach's "What the World Needs Now Is Love" — seemed to contradict the tart flavor of the rest of the film.

In Mazursky's next two films the sentimentality and kitsch romanticism of that conclusion became more dominant. **Alex in Wonderland**, Mazursky's imitation **Eight-and-a-half**, was a narrow, self-obsessed film about a blocked movie director. In between pop apocalyptic

Steve Farber has written for Film Comment, Sight & Sound, Film Quarterly, Partisan Review, The New York Times *and* Esquire. *He has also had a book published:* The Movie Rating Game.

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scenes dealing with Vietnam and the black revolution, the film treated the posturing, narcissistic hero as if he were a truly tortured artist; Mazursky had lost all perspective on his characters. That was Mazursky's last film with co-writer Larry Tucker, and after the dissolution of their partnership, Mazursky continued in the sentimental style of **Alex in Wonderland. Blume in Love** had some sharp satiric scenes, but Mazursky treated all the shallow characters very indulgently, apologized for their middle class delusions, and ended with a hymn to the miracle of Hollywood romance. Betraying the early promise that he might become a brilliant contemporary satirist, Mazursky threatened to turn into just another soft-headed Hollywood humanist.

Mazursky's new film **Harry and Tonto** is a pleasant surprise, then, a return to form; it is still slightly too soft, but in blending the trenchant wit of **Bob & Carol** with the sentimentality of **Blume in Love**, Mazursky is developing his own style of bemused, affectionate comedy. His humor and intelligent observation enrich what might have been a mawkish tale of an old man (gracefully underplayed by Art Carney) who finds his life renewed on a crazy cross-country odyssey. **Harry and Tonto** resembles other films about old people embracing life (such as **Kotch, Harold and Maude**, and **The Shameless Old Lady**), but Mazursky never allows the story to degenerate into adorable whimsey.

Some of the material in **Harry and Tonto** is familiar Mazursky satire — for example, the scene in which some suburbanites entertain Harry's black janitor and talk about the soul-food restaurant where they once ate. ("You remember, Burt, that *tiny* little place?") And in the scenes with Harry's Los Angeles son, living in plastic elegance, but penniless, forlorn, broken, Mazursky has etched one of his most stinging portraits of the California Dream turned sour. In spite of these echoes of his other movies, **Harry and Tonto** represents a breakthrough for Mazursky; it is the first film in which he has moved outside the world of Los Angeles swingers and charlatans. Rejecting the self-absorption of **Alex in Wonderland**, Mazursky has discovered a remarkable protagonist — a retired New York teacher who refuses to indulge in self-pity as he grows older and more isolated. Mazursky has created Harry from the inside; the vivid, detailed characterization represents a triumph of imaginative sympathy. Beyond that Mazursky has invented a whole gallery of supporting characters unlike the middle-aged, upper middle class, comically angst-ridden Californians who have up to now populated his films — a crazy Indian medicine man, a grizzly frontier salesman, an uptight New York suburban family, an aging Polish radical, a runaway teenage girl, a proud but senile lady dancer. Mazursky's films have usually concentrated on only a few characters, but in **Harry and Tonto**, with the aid of writer Josh Greenfeld, he has let his imagination run free, and he has won uniformly sensitive, appealing performances from the huge cast.

These characters almost all have shadings and eccentricities that surprise us. Harry's New York son is a harried suburban commuter, yet, in his fumbling way, genuinely concerned about Harry; his grandson (beautifully played by Joshua Mostel, Zero's son), moving through fads a month at a time, changing identity the way a chameleon changes color, is no idealized Hollywood hippie, but a befuddled, generous, lost child. The family scenes are always bizarre and unpredictable; Mazursky has the ability to present remarkably complex, tangled family relationships without simplifying or "explaining" them.

In his last three films Mazursky has been trying to extend his range with scenes that move beyond comedy, and in **Harry and Tonto** he succeeds in creating several melancholy scenes of nostalgic reverie, in which Harry talks to his cat — or to any other willing listener — releasing a flood of memories more urgent than the present. As Harry thinks about his youth, and the options he rejected in exchange for security, he is haunted by a sense of lost opportunities. Yet suddenly, in his seventies, those opportunities are within his reach. When his apartment building in New York is torn down, Harry is cut off from his past, but he comes to realize that his future is still open. Almost by accident he finds himself driving across the country in a used car, and he decides to take advantage of the experience. For the first time in his life he is free of responsibilities, capable of being astonished by all the strange adventures that await him on the road.

In other words, the comedy in **Harry and Tonto** has a poignant aftertaste. Only a few moments are forced: The scene in which Harry visits his old girlfriend, a dancer who studied with Isadora Duncan, and dances with her in the senior citizens' home where she is now entombed, *almost* achieves the sense of elegiac sadness that Mazursky intended; but we are a little too conscious of the director straining for a poetic effect. Mazursky also fails with the ending — a beach scene where Harry chases a cat that reminds him of the dead Tonto and then stops to watch a little girl building a sand castle; the symbolism is embarrassingly crude. But this kind of freeform movie may be impossible to end. None of Mazursky's movies has ended satisfactorily; either he imposes a rousing Hollywood finale that falsifies the rest of the film (**Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice, Blume in Love**), or he simply lets the movie run down and stop arbitrarily (**Alex**

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in Wonderland, Harry and Tonto). More than his other movies, **Harry and Tonto** needs a strong resolution; in his determination to avoid a melodramatic climax, Mazursky settles for a disappointing anticlimax.

Nevertheless, the failures of the movie are overshadowed by its achievements. **Harry and Tonto** is far from a profound movie, but it's honestly entertaining. There is a huge difference between a tv-style gag machine like **Blazing Saddles** and a human comedy like **Harry and Tonto**, which provides the pleasure of recognition. After a couple of abortive efforts, this film sets Mazursky back on the right track, forcing him to stretch his talents and exercise his imagination. The results are very pleasing.

Stephen Farber

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

What's Entertainment?

Of all the great Hollywood studios during the thirties and forties, M.G.M. seemed to be the most powerful, the one with the strongest personality, the most money, the biggest stars. Paramount may have had higher aspirations, Warner Brothers may have been in closer touch with the political realities of those years, but it was M.G.M. that had the most glossy patina. Caught midway between the cultural ambitions of Paramount and the proletarian determinism of Warner Brothers, M.G.M. was the citadel of mid-cult, "home of the stars" and that gilded "M.G.M. look" that even 12-year-olds on long Saturday afternoons learned to recognize.

Yet while Warner's and Paramount's output during those years has a freshness which a lot of film scholars are now beginning to rediscover, M.G.M.'s fabled "production values" now seem camp — M.G.M. movies have aged a lot more quickly. So maybe it isn't quite so surprising to discover that the great power that Mayer and Goldwyn once wielded has evaporated rapidly during the last fifteen years and M.G.M. under Kirkorian and Aubrey has finally gone out of the movie business, while Paramount, Warner's and even such second-rank studios as Universal and Fox have fumbled their way miraculously through the death of the studio system in the sixties to emerge in the seventies as financially solvent organizations once more.

M.G.M., more than the others, was caught in the Golden Myth that was Hollywood and Jim Aubrey's fabled obdurate ignorance is only the final kiss of death planted on an already decaying corpse. Fittingly, M.G.M.'s last gasp is

Fred Astaire dances with furniture in Stanley Donen's ***Royal Wedding.***

nostalgic, a program of anthology films and re-releases designed to wring as much cash as possible from whatever films of value are left in the vaults. **That's Entertainment**, a cagily designed exploitation of the glories that once were M.G.M. is now in release and is to be followed, now that our appetites are whetted, with a program of a dozen or so re-releases and then, after they have run their course, a "That's Entertainment, Part Two."

There's a certain ecological value to all this — at least M.G.M. has a sense of the value of their backlist, unlike Paramount and Warner's — and certainly no one would want to gainsay the real pleasures involved in watching fresh prints of Kelly, Astaire, Garland and all the others doing song-and-dance scenes that have become mythic over the years; nevertheless the film does raise some important issues that are crying out to be discussed: what kind of entertainment, after all, are "they" talking about?

In the only review of the film that has gone further than delighted applause for the nostalgic smorgasbord that Jack Haley, Jr. and Daniel Melnick have served up, Andrew Sarris remarks:

> Curiously, one would think that the old Metro musicals would remind us of the old bygone days of boy-meets-girl fantasies, but no, the buddy system is reinstated retroactively even here.

Hence we get Kelly (Gene) and Sinatra in a number from **High Society** and Kelly (Grace) is nowhere to be seen. Kelly and Astaire dance, variously, with each other, alone, and with various props, but relatively seldom with women. Finally, Sarris continues, "Kelly rubs salt into the

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sexist wound by announcing rather impishly that his favorite dancing partner was Fred Astaire."

As Sarris indicates, this buddy system is at least in part retroactive: there was a real element of boy-meets-girl in the Metro musicals and the male-centered quality of **That's Entertainment** is mainly a matter of editing choices. Yet that anti-feminine thread did exist in order for it to be singled out in the editing. More important, the slant Jack Haley has given to his anthology is instructive. His aim has been (as it always was with M.G.M.) to give the people what they think they want. If they think they want male fantasies in the seventies, well then, a more objective history of the M.G.M. musical will have to wait for another time. The one glorious purpose of **That's Entertainment** is to squeeze a few cold, hard bucks out of the artistic riches in the vaults and the film succeeds very well in that respect.

The result is a carefully slanted production that could more honestly be titled "That's Exploitation!" Every directorial choice evident in the film points in that direction. What does it matter if Bing Crosby made nearly all of his films for Paramount? He did make two for M.G.M. and his name is still saleable now, so give him a role as one of the hosts. Judy Garland may be dead but her name is more profitable than ever; without a doubt, Liza Minelli will be given a central role in **That's Entertainment!** in order to capitalize on her mother's campy popularity. Is nostalgia good box office? Then M.G.M. can heighten our sense of loss with rather ghoulish shots of decayed and decrepit sets in 1973 (Andy Hardy's hometown's gone to seed!) and that particularly smarmy advertising slogan, "Boy, do we need it now!"

Frankly, my dear M.G.M., I don't give a damn: Esther Williams extravaganzas, Andy Hardy's teenage musicals, and Debbie Reynolds "Abba Dabba Dabba Dabba Dabba Dabba Dabba said the monkey to the chimp" are just about the very last things we need now. In fact, as pleasurable as those old routines may be, just possibly they helped get us where we are today.

But **That's Entertainment**, at least as Louis B. Mayer conceived of it for us. When I used to go see those brightly colored fifties musicals as a kid I always used to leave the theatre feeling angry — not because I didn't enjoy them: just because I *did*. But I also felt, even if I couldn't put it into words then, that someway, somehow, I was being had. The music hall and vaudeville traditions of the earlier part of this century out of which the Metro musicals eventually grew were much more honest than their powerful Hollywood successors. There was a sense of involvement on the part of the audience, from singing along to throwing ripe tomatoes. M.G.M. destroyed that tenuous "realist" balance by learning how to create entertainment machines that craftily recycled songs, plots and gimmicks with a kind of esthetic dishonesty which many of us can now recognise as cloying. It doesn't matter that we still find any particular one of these assembly-line products *enjoyable* (I yield to no one in my appreciation for Fred Astaire's work; I like **Singin' in the Rain** as much as the next guy): what does matter, after all, is the attitude of the people who made these films towards their audiences.

And That's Exploitation! That M.G.M. is no longer with us is some small indication of a renewed communal health.

James Monaco

Yes, we have no verses

The theory of exploitation that informs **That's Entertainment!** extends even to the editing of the film. Most of the clips have been truncated: the introductions to the dance routines have been trimmed in order to focus on the riotous climaxes; the verses of the old popular songs disappear, only the choruses remain. In fact, in the original 70mm release print of the film, this theory of esthetic "goosing" has been extended even further: Haley starts many of the clips in a standard aspect ratio accompanied by monophonic sound. Then, as the tempo builds, he quietly expands to a widescreen ratio and "wraps" the "stereophonically enhanced" sound around the audience. Having excerpted only the heights of the dramatic curves, he has to provide this kind of artificial rising tempo to jazz up what would otherwise be a series of flat, repetitive peaks.

The idea is power, pure exploitative power. Come to think of it, Stanley Kubrick's use of "Singin' in the Rain" in **Clockwork Orange** makes a lot more sense thematically now. (In fact, maybe **2001: A Space Odyssey** was really the last of the great M.G.M. musicals: an apotheosis: finally all the people were gone, only the machines danced!)

James Monaco

THE NIGHT PORTER

Last Tango in Auschwitz

Banned in director Liliana Cavani's native Italy for "obscenity," **The Night Porter** has been a big hit in Paris, appealing to both the credit-card bohemia of St. Germain-des-Prés and the factory workers exiled in the suburbs. Who could resist those posters of Charlotte Rampling *torse nu* in an SS uniform?

Miss Rampling — Lucia in the film — wears the uniform while performing a pseudo-Dietrich routine for a group of SS officers in a concentration camp. She is a prisoner herself, but as the girl friend of *Sturmbannfuhrer* Max (Dirk Bogarde), who arranged the entertainment, she enjoys certain privileges, and at the end of her number Max presents her with a cardboard box. The box contains the head of a male prisoner who, as Max puts it, has been "tormenting" Lucia. Max, a man of some culture, thought it would be amusing to do a takeoff on the Salome legend.

This happens in flashback. The film actually starts in the year 1957 with Max working as night porter in a gloomy Vienna hotel. Lucia checks in, accompanied by her husband, a touring orchestra conductor. Exchange of ghost-from-the-past looks between Lucia and Max. Lucia's initial instinct is to get out of town, but Max still has that old fascist charm, and as soon as Lucia's husband leaves to continue his tour, Lucia moves into Max's place. He chains her up, and the focus of interest is not so much their lovemaking as the sadistic frills that go with it, including one unpleasant bit involving broken glass.

Max, however, is not the only unreconstructed Nazi on the loose in Vienna. A gang of his buddies from the camp hold regular meetings in the hotel and they want to put Max through a mock court trial such as they themselves have already undergone. The purpose of the trial and preceding investigation, if you can believe it, is simultaneously to destroy evidence (human as well as documentary) of the defendant's crimes, and to liberate him from a sense of guilt. But Max doesn't want to play: he rather enjoys feeling guilty. "You're mad," they tell him, and certainly it takes one to know one. When the gang get wind of Lucia's existence, they lay siege to Max's apartment, reducing the lovers to starvation. Finally, Max dresses up in his old uniform, Lucia puts on a gown, and they drive out to a bridge over the Danube, followed by one of the gang. When Max and Lucia get out of the car, he shoots them dead.

The Night Porter's similarities to **Last Tango in Paris** and **The Damned** need no emphasis, but its true paternity is Losey's **The Servant**. Destructive sexuality within confined physical surroundings, a sense of highbrow insulation from the lives of ordinary men and women, stilted dialogue (apart from Miss Rampling and Bogarde, the actors are dubbed, Berlitz English that comes through as pure Harold Pinter) — could anything be more like Losey? Bogarde gives a typical Loseyan performance, all febrile anguish, at one point conveying profound emotion by inclining his head back and covering his left eye with his fist. Even so, he's more watchable than Miss Rampling, a mistress of the blank look.

As for the film itself, I'm baffled. One theory is that it illustrates Baudelaire's comparison of sexual love to the relationship between an executioner and victim. But leaving aside the question

Geoffrey Minish — a regular contributor — works for Agence France Presse in Paris.

of Baudelaire's reliability as a guide to sex, the film is too untidy for that particular metaphor. What is the point of having all those other Nazis around? Perhaps Liliana Cavani wanted to express the Italian left's fear of resurgent fascism. In that case, why not set the film in present-day Italy?

Now of course, it is not necessary to know what a film is driving at in order to enjoy it. A Bergman or a Jancso can leave you guessing, but their work usually generates sufficient emotional electricity, combined with sheer cinematic flair, to compensate for the sense of having missed the point. In fact, I think we have to make a distinction between understanding and interpretation: if you enjoy a film, or any work of art, you understand it, in the truest sense. (That's why "constructive" criticism is so hard to write. How do you correctly diagnose a warm glow around the diaphragm? Good art is always a mystery, and even the best criticism is mostly guesswork.)

Besides, talk about an artist's "intention" is misleading. Bergman says his films begin from a few images floating around in his mind, and surely such building from fragmentary intuition of the completed work is the proper artistic method. The other type of artist, the man who starts out knowing exactly what he wants to say, belongs in the fortune-cookie industry. I don't think Miss Cavani has that sort of mentality; a film as confused as **The Night Porter** just has to be a work of instinct. But whatever her intentions on the unconscious level, the final result is eerily frivolous, a "Last Tango In Auschwitz" for the jaded and the frustrated.

Geoffrey Minish

THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

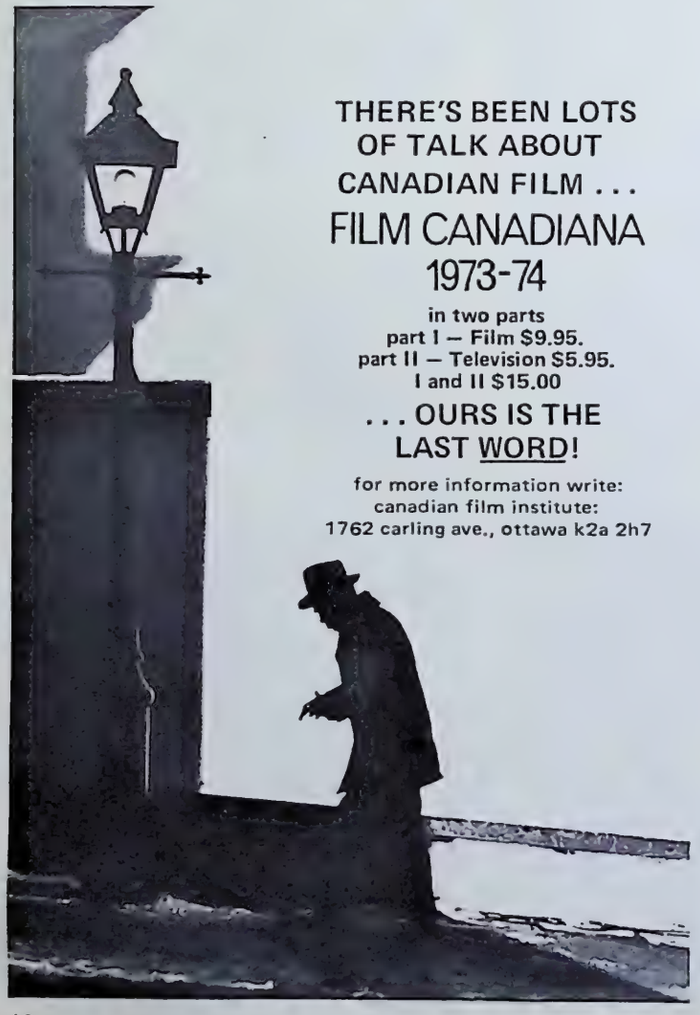
Alchemy at 24 f.p.s.

One has to admit that **The Holy Mountain** is a whole lot better than **El Topo**. On the other hand, it *could* be a whole lot better than **El Topo** and still be pretty lousy. Such is the case.

I've never been able to figure out why anybody liked **El Topo** in the first place. I guess there's never any shortage of people ready to be sucked into a meaningless, self-indulgent circus of undigested surrealist imagery — especially if there are lots of tits, and a lavish helping of hype. After **El Topo** I swore that I'd never set foot in another theater where a Jodorowsky film was playing; nonetheless, professional responsibility triumphed, and I went to see **Holy Mountain.** It wasn't nearly as excruciating as **El Topo** and, much as I hate to admit it, I guess I'll go see his next one.

Who is this Jodorowsky dude anyway? Turns out he was born in Iquique, a small seaport town in northern Chile. He moved to Santiago for a while, where he got into theater and mime. Then he went to Paris, where he worked with Marcel Marceau, Arrabal and Topor (co-founding the "Panic" movement, whatever that is). Then he went to Mexico, where he directed more than 100 plays (classical drama, as well as Ionesco, Beckett and Arrabal) for the National Theater in Mexico City. In fact, when we were in D.F. a year or so ago, there was a production of Molière at the National Theater, directed by Jodorowsky; I kinda wish I had gone to see it, now. Anyway, **El Topo** was his second film, and **Holy Mountain** is his third.

So Jodorowsky comes by his surrealism honestly. The question is: What does he do with it? In **El Topo,** he grafted his Surrealist/Theater of Cruelty schtick onto a western movie plot that never quite took the overlay. In **Holy Mountain** he has constructed a much more appropriate vehicle for his overkill symbolism — a classic tale of the Search for Enlightenment, vaguely inspired by Hesse's *Journey to the East.* A thief, the main character, joins forces with a group of powerful politicians and industrialists to storm the Holy Mountain and wrest the secret of eternal life from the Immortals who live there. The spiritual pilgrims are headed by an alchemist-guru, played with



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real charm by Jodorowsky himself.

The sets and costumes are strikingly beautiful, showing a strong tantric art influence, and the photography (in TechniScope, as opposed to **El Topo**'s 16mm) is quite gorgeous. All the classic surrealist techniques are called into play — like when a young woman is shot down by police, and doves fly out of the wound. But finally, **Holy Mountain** is all surface and very little meaning. The various industrialists, for instance, are depicted as very evil people — yet they are presented as holy seekers after enlightenment. The ending, intended to be a reverse-whammy zen kicker, is so obvious you can see it coming miles away. Endless shots of naked women and simulated screwing have no shock value in an era of hard-core porno flicks. Finally, one has to ask: What is this *about*? And the answer is: Nothing.

In a singularly appropriate scene, the alchemist asks the thief if he would like some gold. When the thief answers affirmatively, the alchemist has him defecate into a glass retort, the contents of which are then processed to produce the precious metal. Unfortunately, Jodorowsky-as-filmmaker is not nearly as successful at turning shit into gold.

Michael Goodwin

THE SEDUCTION OF MIMI

The patterns of compromise

Shortly before **The Seduction of Mimi** opened in New York, American audiences were introduced to Lina Wertmuller's highly political films through her later **Love & Anarchy**. Both films were written and directed by Wertmuller, yet they differ radically in form: **Love & Anarchy**, linear and romantic, chronicles the final days of a doomed anarchist who wants to assassinate Mussolini; **Mimi**, on the other hand, is a cyclical, hilarious farce. Binding these films together, however, is a sensibility whose roots are firmly implanted in the finest tradition of Italian neo-realism — a profoundly humanistic politic that embraces characters and audience alike.

Wertmuller's flamboyant style places her in the more contemporary mold of Bertolucci and particularly that of Fellini, for whom she worked as assistant director on **Eight-and-a-half.** Certainly, balletic movements of character and camera, carnival images of affirmation, and a poetic regard for faces prompt these references. But where Fellini's study of faces has become increasingly exploitative, Wertmuller's is compassionate and often reverential. And where Bertolucci's application of psychology is elaborately simplistic, Wertmuller's films delight in the complexities

Catherine Plumb is a freelance writer in New York City. She has recently written on film for Jump Cut.

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of human behavior that defy easy definition.

Certainly, in **The Seduction of Mimi** easy definitions abound. They growl and cajole and finally ensnare Mimi (Giancarlo Giannini, who also performed superbly as the anarchist in **L&A**) in their sticky, circular logic. Carmello Mardecheo, the Mimi of the title, is a volatile, vulnerable, and — alas — virile Sicilian worker whose needs are very simple. They are also mutually exclusive. And therein hangs the tale. He wants to be a good Communist, for example, but he also insists that his son must be a king. He wants to be a simple, "civilized" metalworker, but "if there's a strike," he asks after he's been made a foreman, "the books won't balance and then where will a poor wretch find work?" Mimi wants to be a reasonable man, but when his wife cuckolds him, he almost kills her.

Yet for all the film's frenzied humor, **Mimi** is a deeply serious film. Rather than focusing on a solitary, fruitless act as one man's response to institutionalized injustice (**L&A**), **Mimi** concentrates on the patterns and processes that lead to self-defeating compromise. In this crucial sense, **Mimi** is a political parable and its comic stance clarifies the political issues central to its theme by providing an objectifying distance. Wertmuller draws heavily upon Bolognini's **Il Bell'Antonio** and Germi's **Divorzio All'Italiana** for characterization and a comic backdrop of Sicilian society, but she broadens the spectrum of social satire by providing a viable alternative to chaos.

"Politics isn't something you can seal off in a watertight compartment," a comrade explains to Mimi. "It's with you all day long." Indeed, Mimi's desperate attempts to separate the politically inseparable areas of his daily life (work, sex, traditions of honor, codes of silence, parental pride, and — since we're talking about Sicily — The Mafia) result in a trap of Byzantine complexity. Watching **The Seduction of Mimi** is a bit like watching an ant with noseplugs dive into a vat of honey: the equipment just can't save him.

For Mimi, that equipment is a vague set of left-wing ideals and a notion that the Enemy can be easily defined. The ominous Mafia cousins, for example, who head Church, State, and Industry in Mimi's Catania. The film's three mafiosi roles are all played by Turi Ferro, an actor who sports a triangular pattern of moles on his right cheek. Each time Ferro appears on the screen, the camera cuts from an extreme close-up of Mimi's frightened eyes to a maniacal zoom on the mafioso's moles. By virtue of its inherent properties, of course, the zoom is obtrusive and Wertmuller takes full advantage of its distantiating nature. You laugh at the silly dialectic the zoom imposes here (Mimi vs. Moles), but the laughter — rather than being escapist — is rooted in a deeper recognition. Since facial moles are neither inherently funny or threatening, the humor of the equation lies in our recognizing the absurd process by which Mimi attempts to escape political reality. (American films, on the other hand, continue to capitalize on our blinding need to externalize and localize the sources of our fears. The vigilante movies, from **Dirty Harry** to **Death Wish**, deify at astounding profits the very processes Wertmuller exposes and deflates.)

Furthermore, **The Seduction of Mimi** does a remarkable job of politicizing sex without proselytizing and, once again, the vehicle is humor. The bed is Mimi's battleground and each liaison takes on the magnitude of a life and death struggle. Terms of endearment border on homicidal threat ("I'll massacre you with love"); camera angles and, again, distortive lenses illuminate the political tensions of Mimi's sexual forays; even battle hymns accompany his two most important — and dialectically opposed — sexual crusades. Mimi's tortured pursuit of the virginal and wise Fiore (Mariangela Melato, who acted with Giannini in **L&A**) is attended by repeated segments of Verdi's "La Traviata," while his stalking of the mountainous Amelia (Elena Fiore,

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again, in **L&A**) is parodied on the soundtrack by relentless tango music. Fiore is Wertmuller's muse of Truth, with her clown-like costumes and bright red hair, and the use of the opera elevates Mimi's passion for her to the level of classic and doomed romanticism, as well as providing a basis for a reversal of the opera's theme of Lost Woman. The tango music, on the other hand, and its associations with other less torrid sexual rites, counter what might have become a cruel and humiliating sequence with Amelia. Instead, explicit sex is replaced by explicit sexual politics and the result is one of the funniest sexual battles you will see on film.

When **Mimi** was shown at Cannes in 1972, winning for Wertmuller the Festival's award for best director, it was entitled **Mimi Metallurgico, Ferito Nell'Onore** (roughly, **Mimi the Metalworker, His Honor Betrayed**). Since then, the film has been acquired in the States by New Line Cinema, has lost almost one-third of its original running time, and has undergone a particularly apt title change. It would be useless — though admittedly tempting — to speculate about the film in its original form, but in its new ninety-minute length, **Mimi** is tight, bawdy, irreverent, and wise. Wertmuller has built on a rich tradition of Italian cinema and civilization in **Mimi**, fully integrating her politics and her art. Indeed, her distinction as a filmmaker is to have compromised neither in the process.

Catherine Plumb

BINGO

Beyond provincialism

One of the most popular and innocent games in French Canada becomes a symbol of rotten capitalism in this turbulent film. A frivolous preoccupation for careless and uninvolved citizens, Bingo is considered marginal to the real issues, which are unequivocally of a political nature. Political? Extreme cautiousness is required here since Jean-Claude Lord, the director, through a boisterous publicity campaign, has clearly stressed that **Bingo** is not a *political* film, while omitting to define the term. Yet, **Bingo** is unremittingly concerned with politics.

The plot is manifold. The beginning of the film focuses on the romance of two young students, François (Réjean Guénette) and Geneviève (Anne-Marie Provencher). Meanwhile, François' father (Jean Duceppe) is among the workers who have been laid off from the J.W. Goldwater and Sons factory, which has passed into American hands and is to be automatized. The workers organize a strike. Some of them find that picketing is too limited a means of pressure. Even François, an amateur photographer, soon abandons the camera for a more radical course of action. Along with a number of workers, he joins a group of activists and tries to kidnap Goldwater himself. But the latter is not among the incarcerated hostages. To make things worse, the strike occurs at a period of a provincial election and the candidates, taking advantage of the social turmoil, exploit the fear of the masses. The kidnappers then start bombing the various electoral polls. A wave of terrorism rises. The activists are now in danger and they eventually have to split. In the process, François realizes vaguely that terrorism may not be the answer and starts wondering about the real aims of Pierre (Gérard Pelletier), the leader of the group. Alarmed by François' doubts, Pierre, before leaving for South America, orders him eliminated. François and Geneviève are shot.

Not political? If Lord meant that his film was not intended to raise the viewer's political consciousness, then he is right. For the rendering of politics in **Bingo** is outright commercial, sacrificing enlightenment for the sake of entertainment. One of its devices is its constant recourse to melodrama, which was also prominent in Lord's first feature film, **Les Colombes.** This may facilitate **Bingo**'s popular appeal, but at the same time it seriously compromises the film's dramatic powers (so does the inappropriate pop musical theme, for that matter). Strikes, fights, kidnappings, bombings and shootings constitute as many concessions to obtain purely spectacular results. Obviously, Lord is never interested in revealing the hidden forces beneath a social crisis. And while he shuffles a lot of ideas, he never takes a stand. With the result that the first film to be released that attempts primarily to depict the Quebec October events of 1970 is already full of clichés, a fact further emphasized by Lord's numerous borrowings from other political films (Costa-Gavras', for example: the kidnapping, as derived from **State of Siege**; the ending with stills, a reminder of **Z**).

Even the characters — and this film requires quite a number of them — are stereotyped. You never learn their true identity. They are just spending a lot of energy, often without thinking. Due to their oversimplistic treatment, they appear as social entities rather than individuals. And since they are altogether superficial, they often lack conviction. Réjean Guénette, a promising young actor and a newcomer to the screen, performs with great ease and skill; but even his role, the most important in the film, lacks depth and scope.

Overlooking the flaws of the limited script (by Lord and four others), perhaps the highlight and major quality of the film resides in its fast-paced action. It never lingers because it is tightly woven, and the film moves along with a sure sense of

Mr. Rozon is Assistant Editor and film critic for Quebec's Vie des Arts *magazine.*

FILMMAKERS' QUIZ:

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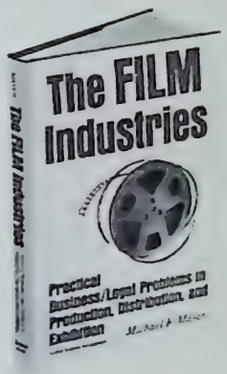

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rhythm. A highly effective technique is mastered here which will no doubt distract a great number of viewers from the overall shallowness of treatment and content.

A film like **Bingo** permits us to reappraise, finally, the Canadian film industry. No doubt that the complexity of **Bingo** indicates that ambitious productions can be done here, and with an adequate crew of technicians. Also, Jean-Claude Lord must be congratulated for having fully understood the requirements inherent in the making of a popular success. (Our film industry lacks this quality — how many financial successes have we known?) Once this essential step is properly assimilated, we may attain higher levels of entertainment. The next logical step, however, is to strive for this dual quality: a popular success not devoid of artistic merit. Once this goal is reached, we will finally enjoy international status, prestige and recognition, in addition to financial profit. Otherwise, our cinema will always remain local, not to say provincial, and face serious financial difficulties to survive, or remain second-rate, as evidenced by the majority of our film productions.

René Rozon

WEDDING IN BLOOD

Girl meets car...

Claude Chabrol hasn't made a good film since **The Cousins** in 1959, a long time ago, but this doesn't seem to have hurt his reputation — which keeps growing in inverse relation to the quality of his films. His tidy murder stories drop off the assembly line with the regularity of this year's new model automobile, and they continue, despite the rising cost of imports, to win a good share of the domestic critical and financial market. As in other assembly line operations, however, the rationalization of production has taken its toll. Each year the style changes become fewer and farther between, as it becomes clear that Chabrol has adopted the Volkswagon strategy of reliance on a basic tried and true formula.

This recipe (to change the metaphor) is revealed in an inviolate state in **Wedding in Blood**. It consists of a generous display of the charms of Stephane Audran playing against a major French lead, in this case Michel Piccoli; interminable automobile trips (**Wedding in Blood** seems to have been sponsored by Citroën) through a picture postcard autumnal landscape; and a couple of murders, all embedded in a gelatinous and tasteless pudding of French provincial life for which the director demonstrates an insatiable appetite.

Wedding in Blood is a gallicized version of Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. Audran and Piccoli, locked in a passionate adulterous affair, dispose of their unwanted spouses and are apparently well on their way to domestic bliss when the cat is let out of the bag by Audran's devoted daughter who inexplicably (naïveté or jealousy?) reveals the crime to the police.

Chabrol extracts from his story certain obvious and uninteresting ironies which presumably reflect his jaundiced view of the provincial bourgeoisie. Despite the violent and homicidal consequences of the affair, it becomes clear that Piccoli differs from Audran's husband largely in that he possesses a less expensive Citroën. As the lovers approach their goal of freedom, they become increasingly constrained and obsessed, finally overshadowed by the manic energy of Audran's cuckolded husband. But the portraits of provincial life lack force; they are so broad as to surpass caricature and descend into self-parody. Occasionally it seems that the subject of the film is Bunuel's **The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie** to which Chabrol continually refers through the frequent and meticulously rendered dinner scenes, the comically frantic love-making between the two principals, and even the fondling of Audran's foot by Piccoli.

Despite Chabrol's bourgeois-baiting, **Wedding in Blood** reveals a plodding and methodical sensibility closer to Charles Bovary than to Flaubert. And for all Chabrol's notorious Catholic concern with the mechanics of guilt, **Wedding in Blood** is more the secular product of the bourgeois craftsman, devoid of inspiration and grace, than it is an homage to Chabrol's professed model, Alfred Hitchcock. Chabrol has managed to achieve what few of the many imitators of Hitchcock ever did — to drain the master of suspense and intellectual playfulness and substitute in their stead the lobotomized solidity of the well-made film. The cutting is extremely literal, each cut being telegraphed in advance. If a character mails a letter, the next shot is sure to be the post-office. What might pass for economy or control in a more interesting film like **Le Boucher**, is ponderous and claustrophobic in this one. **Wedding in Blood** isn't even that well made. The slow, somnolent pans jerk across the screen, while even the stately set-ups twitch and jump like scared rabbits.

Chabrol's youthful ambition, to do the small theme well, has been all too successfully realized in this romance of the Citroëns. In film after film he reiterates the exhaustion of the New Wave: the dead-ended imitation of American films; the obsessive, if submerged, religiosity; the tiresome, ingrown references to film culture; the formal sterility; and, for all the twitting of Pompidou, a deeply conservative sensibility.

Peter Biskind

Peter Biskind is a documentary filmmaker who has been published previously in Film Quarterly *and* Film Heritage.

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A 16 mm Booker's Guide to Sources of Films Mentioned in this Issue.

Accatone. Can:MMP. US:MAB.
Alex in Wonderland. Can:BEL. US:FI.
Angels with Dirty Faces. Can:WB. US:UA,WP.
Angry Hills. Can:BEL. US:FI
Apache. UA.
Attack! UA.
Autumn Leaves. Can:VC. US:SWK.
Les Biches. Can:CPX, PR, MMP. US:MAB.
The Big Knife. UA.
The Big Leaguer. Can:BEL. US:UA.
Bingo. FM.
Blood on the Sun. Can:RIT. US:MOD.
Blume In Love. WB.
Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice. Can:CRI. US:SWK.
Le Boucher. Can IFD.
The Boyfriend. Can:BEL. US:FI.
The Boys In the Band. Can:CRI. US:SWK.
The Christian Licorice Store. Can:CRI.
Clockwork Orange. WB.
The Conversation. Can:PAR. US:FI.
The Cousins. Can:VC. US:CMH.
Decameron. UA.
Devil Dogs of the Air. UA.
The Devils. WB.
The Dirty Dozen. Can:BEL. US:FI.
Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie. Can:BEL? US:FI?
Divorzio All'Italiana. Can:IFD. US:MAB.
Dusty and Sweets McGee. WB.
El Topo. Can:FAR. US:ABK.
Emperor of the North. Can:BEL. US:FI.
Enter the Dragon. WB.
Fist of Fury (The Chinese Connection). WB*
Flight of the Phoenix. Can:BEL. US:FI.
Footlight Parade. Can:WB. US:MAB.
Force of Evil. Can:AST. US:BUD, IVY.
Four for Texas. Can:WB. US:MAB, BUD, MOD.
The Fox. Can:IFD. US:WB.
Fun and Games. Can:BEL*
Gallant Hours. UA.
The Garment Jungle. US:MAB, SWK.
G-Men. WB.
Great Guy. Can:ITF. US:FCE.
The Grissom Gang. Can:IFD. US:NGP.
Harold and Maude. Can:PAR. US:FI.
Harry and Tonto. Can:BEL. US:FI.
High Society. Can:BEL. US:FI*
The Holy Mountain. Can:FAR. US:ABK.
Hush, Hush ... Sweet Charlotte. Can:BEL. US:FI.
I Love You, Alice B. Toklas. Can:WB? US:MAB. SWK.
Johnny Come Lately. Can:RIT.
Kid Blue. Can:BEL* US:FI?
The Killing of Sister George. Can:IFD. US:FI.
Kiss Me Deadly. UA.
Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye. Can:RIT. US:MOD.
Kotch. Can:CRI, IFD.
Kustom Kar Kommandos. US:FMC.
The Last Sunset. UNI.
The Legend of Lylah Clare. Can:UNI. US:FI.
Love and Anarchy. US:NLC?
Lovemaking. US:CCC, MMR.
Loving. Can:VC. US:SWK.
LP. US:CCC.
The Luck of Ginger Coffey. Can:MMP. US:WR.
The Mattei Affair. Can:PAR US:FI?
Medea. Can:NCE. US:NLC.
Midsummer Night's Dream. US:FI.
Night Mail. US:CMH.
The Night Porter. US:AEP*
Oedipus Rex. US:CMH.
One, Two, Three. UA.
The Phoenix (Ten Seconds to Hell). UA.
The Public Enemy. Can:WB. US:MAB, CMH.
A Quickie. US:CCC, MMR.
The Roaring Twenties. Can:WB. US:CMH.
Savage Messiah. Can:BEL. US:FI.
Scorpio Rising. US:FMC.
The Seduction of Mimi. US:NLC.
The Shameless Old Lady. Can:CRI, VC. US:WR.
Short Cut to Hell. Can:PAR* US:FI*
Singin' in the Rain. Can:BEL. US:FI.
Sodom and Gomorrah. Can:BEL US:FI.
Taras Bulba. UA.
That's Entertainment! UA*
13 Rue Madeleine. Can:BEL. US:FI.
This Gun for Hire. UNI
Too Late the Hero. Can:IFD. US:FI
Triple Echo. Can:AST* US:ALT*
2001: A Space Odyssey. Can:BEL. US:FI.
Uccelacci e Uccellini (Big Birds and Little Birds; Hawks and Sparrows). US:MAB.
Uizana's Raid. UNI.
Up the Sandbox. WB.
Vera Cruz. UA.
Wedding in Blood. US:NLC.
Whatever Happened to Baby Jane? Can:WB. US:MAB, BUD.
White Heat. Can:WB. US:UA, WP.
Women in Love. UA.
World for Ransom. US:IVY.
Yankee Doodle Dandy. US:MAB.
You Only Live Twice. UA.

Additions and Corrections
Montreal Main (by Frank Vitale; Vol. 4 No. 4). Can:NCE. US:RON

* 16mm prints may not be available currently.
While based on sources we believe reliable and up-to-date, *Take One* cannot guarantee the accuracy of any of the above information, nor assume any liability for the results of any misinformation given. We will be happy to print additions and corrections in future issues.

ABK. Abkco Films, 1700 Broadway, New York, New York 10019.
AEP. Avco Embassy Pictures, 1301 Ave of the Americas, NYC 10019.
ALT. Altura Films International, 225 East 46th St., New York, N.Y. 10017.
AST. Astral Films, 224 Davenport Rd., Toronto M5R 1J7
BEL. BelleVue Film Distributors, 227 Victoria Street, Toronto 2, Ont.
BUD. Budget Films, 4590 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, Ca. 90029.
CCC. Canyon Cinema Cooperative, Room 220, Industrial Center Bldg., Sausalito, Cal. 94965.
CMH. Contemporary Films/McGraw Hill, Princeton Road, Hightstown, N.J. 08520
CPX. Cinepix, 8275 Mayrand, Montreal.
CRI. Criterion Films, 2310 Benny Ave., Montréal.
FAR. Faroun Films, 136 St. Paul St., E., Montreal 127.
FCE: Film Classic Exchange, 1926 S. Vermont Ave., Los Angeles, Cal. 90007.
FI. Films Inc., 1144 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette, Ill. 60091
FM. Films Mutuels, 225 Roy St., E., Montreal.
FMC. Film-Makers' Cooperative, 175 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016.
IFD. International Film Distributors, 20 Bloor St. W., Toronto 5, Ont.
ITF. International Tele-Film. 47 Densley Ave., Toronto, Ont. M6M 2P5
IVY. Ivy Films, 165 W. 46th St., NYC 10022.
MAB. MacMillan Audio Brandon, 34 MacQuesten Parkway S., Mount Vernon, N.Y. 10550.
MMP. Marlin Motion Pictures, 47 Lakeshore Road E., Port Credit, Ont.
MMR. Multi Media Resources Center, 340 Jones Street, Box 439E. San Francisco, Cal. 94102
MOD. Modern Sound Pictures, 1402 Howard St., Omaha, Nebraska 68102
NCE. New Cinema Enterprises, 35 Britain St., Toronto M5A 1R7.
NGP. National General Pictures, 600 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022.
NLC. New Line Cinema, 121 University Place, New York, N.Y. 10003.
PAR. Paramount Pictures, Toronto Star Building, 1 Yonge St., Toronto, Ont.
PR. Prima Films, Suite 205, 135 Sherbrooke St. E., Montreal, Que.
RIT. George Ritter Films Ltd., 38 Yorkville Ave., Toronto, Ont. M4W 1L5
RON. Roninfilm, 43 West 61st Street, New York, N.Y. 10023
SWK. Swank Motion Pictures, 201 South Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, Mo. 63166.
UA. United Artists Corp., Suite 800, 2180 Yonge St., Toronto, Ont. and 729 7th Ave., NYC 10019
UNI. Universal Films, 2450 Victoria Park Ave., Willowdale, Ont. and 445 Park Ave., NYC 10022
VC. Visual Consultants, 72 Carlton St., Toronto, Ont
WB. Warner Brothers Distributors, 70 Carlton St., Toronto, Ont. and 400 Warner Blvd., Burbank, Cal. 91505.
WP. Willoughby Peerless, 115 West 31st St., New York, N.Y. 10017.
WR. Walter Reade 16, 241 East 34th St., NYC 10016.

16 mm News

A column of information for those among our readers who regularly book 16mm films for classroom, film society, etc. Distributors are invited to send word of new releases, etc. to 16mm News, Take One, Box 1778, Station B, Montreal, Quebec H3B 3L3. We'll print as much of it as we can.

Vision Quest (Box 206, Lawrenceville, N.J. 08648; 609-896-1359) have just released a 55-minute colour documentary on one of the most controversial figures in modern science, **Velikovsky: The Bonds of the Past**, about the author of *Worlds in Collision*. The Vision Quest people also remind us that they are now the distributors of four films by and/or about Alexander Alexeieff, who developed the technique of "animated engraving" with a pinboard.

Kristina Nordstrom has organized Cinema Femina, a referral service created to help women filmmakers and people who wish to program women's films. They have a 12-page catalog that describes over 100 films made by women which are available for rental, plus a listing of over 50 filmmakers and critics willing to make speaking engagements and appear at one-woman shows. Contact: Cinema Femina, 250 West 57th Street, New York, New York 10019; 212-581-1066.

Toronto's New Cinema Enterprises is proud and happy to announce that they're now the exclusive distributors in Canada of the prestigious Janus Collection of classic films (including Bergman's **Seventh Seal, Wild Strawberries** and **Winter Light**, and Sir Laurence Olivier's **Richard III**). They also have Canadian rights to Cinda Firestone's award-winning **Attica**. Write Linda Beath, New Cinema Enterprises, 35 Britain Street, Toronto, Ontario M5A 1R7 (416-862-1674).

A relatively recent arrival on the 16mm distribution scene in the U.S. is the Reel Theatre division of Productions Unlimited (40 West 57th Street, New York, New York 10019; 212-541-6770). Among the features they're handling are the animated feature, **Fantastic Planet**, the Academy Award-nominee, **House on Chelouche Street**, and Jimmy Cliff's **The Harder They Come.**

> "I like Kris Kristofferson because he writes poetry, and he's a f[ucking] good man. Working with Kris on **Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid** was one of the great experiences of my life. Bobby Dylan is the darling of everybody and he is a giant pain in the ass. I could identify with Kris, but not with Bobby. I think he's the most convoluted personality I ever met in my life. We were scoring, and he said, "I got a great cue here," and I said, "Bobby, you are really and truly a musician and you are the greatest in the world," and all that shit, but I'm saying, "You know the first four bars you've just taken are from 'Help Me Make It Through the Night', and I just can't use it," and after that he never talked to me again.
>
> — Sam Peckinpah, *New York Magazine*

Columns

Outs

On manipulating the manipulators

You may not have noticed, but since Pauline Kael departed the *New Yorker* this spring on her annual hiatus her name has been popping up in ads for movies she didn't review. **The Conversation**, **Going Places**, **The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz**, **Harry and Tonto** have all been endorsed by Kael, *ex officio*, and usually with great enthusiasm. About **The Conversation**, she wrote, if memory serves, "I loved it, loved the way it worked..." and about **Harry and Tonto**, "a wonderful comedy... like no other movie." I may have missed the exact phrasing, but the sense at least is right. The originals may be checked in the movie pages of your local paper.

You are not likely to have missed, though, Kael's long article "On the Future of Movies," which ran in the *New Yorker*'s August 5 issue. Of all writers on film, whether they call themselves critics or reviewers, Kael is the most widely read and widely respected; she may even be the most influential, at least among an audience of literate if not inveterate moviegoers. I've always thought that Andrew Sarris had the strongest and most formative influence on those younger film writers who like to keep themselves a little out of the mainstream. His charged and partisan writing has been a shaping force on Jon Landau, Stuart Byron of the Boston *Real Paper*, Richard Corliss of *Film Comment*; Michael Goodwin and James Monaco (who appear in these very pages), and of course on his troops who appear weekly in the film section of the *Village Voice*, which Sarris oversees. Kael has her younger adherents, too — I think largely and most immediately of Gary Arnold, of the *Washington Post*, and Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Tribune*, with immediate apologies if I've gotten either of those newspaper affiliations wrong. Largely, though, I think Sarris has more disciples among the young critic-reviewers. Kael has a larger influence generally, a heavier clout with a less specialized readership, and the attention, most of all, of a great many filmmakers. She barks at them like a bad conscience.

So any major piece by Kael creates something of a stir just by its appearance. "On the Future of Movies" is brash and tough and a little nervous, and carries a serious caution: that if filmmakers in America don't band together and throw off all the moneymen and middlemen who leech off their talent, then American movies will remain in perpetual adolescence. The piece has two distinct parts: this one, just paraphrased, which is its conclusion; and the opening, a fierce and sorrowful assessment of how talent can be subordinated to the requirements of business, and how movie executives manipulate masses of people into seeing what they want them to see, and ignoring what the executives themselves don't care much about.

The key to all this manipulation, Kael says, is promotion and advertising. In popular culture, as in politics, Kael says, "advertising is a form of psychological warfare that is becoming harder to fight with aboveboard weapons." Later on, she writes "A reviewer's words can't be heard above the din [of all the drumbeating] unless they're amplified in the ads."

So this, it would seem, is Kael's rationale for writing blurbs. She sees the situation as hand-to-hand warfare in the trenches, and her weapon is that old judo principle they used to teach in gym class: use the opponent's weight to your own advantage. Flip him with the momentum of his own force.

Kael may be infighting, but she's playing by rules made by the people she despises and finds so dangerous, all the hucksters and flacks and the studio bosses. Her solution to the problem of superhype is to join it, which is why she comes up with these quotes, why, when she's working her stint at the *New Yorker*, she lets whole reviews be rerun as advertisements. Long columns in the *Sunday Times* are periodically soaked up with reprints of her original notices of **Last Tango in Paris**, or **Conrack**, or **Thieves Like Us**. These ploys are not peculiar to her, and there are fair arguments to be made in justifying them. What happens, though, when a critic allows a review to bolster a movie in this way is quite the opposite from what was intended. The critic's credibility is eroded. The review becomes not a comment, or an assessment, but a piece of advertising.

Some of this is unavoidable. In making a judgement about a movie, a critic will almost always say something of an excerptable nature, some approving comment which is supposed to lure audiences into a theatre. On a low level, it's called consumer guidance. On a somewhat higher one, it's called historical evaluation. Either way, it can be turned into a come-on. In any case, because the reviewer wants to support a movie he favors, he presumably won't mind if his writing is used to shill. But there are certain strong limits to this, or ought to be. There's a point past which a critic can stop being an advocate and look like a salesman.

Vincent Canby, writing about his early days as a *Variety* reporter, once told a story very much to the point. New to the job, Canby had turned in a review which was particularly rough on an actor. The actor was furious and talked about filing suit. Canby, concerned, took the matter to Abel Green, an editor who possessed in abundance what Green himself would probably have called "showbiz savvy." Green heard Canby out, then waved him away with a single comment. "I don't worry when they threaten to sue," he said. "I only worry when they want to reprint you in your entirety." The lesson doesn't seem to have taken, though. It seems sometimes that Canby's reviews are reprinted in the advertising columns as regularly as they show up in the editorial.

A few years back, television reviewers and a few newspaper hacks found they could make themselves modestly famous by giving good reviews to virtually everything. The logic was hard to beat. Movie companies are always looking for a strong quote, and the more you're quoted, the better you're known. Now there are a few names that appear in New York movie ads as frequently as the MPAA rating, who can always be relied on for a bit of juice.

Kael is far beyond any of this, of course. She does not so much want to help herself, but movies, give a boost not to her career but to the filmmakers she favors. She wants to drive a wedge into what she sees as a passive, listless audience, and her frustration and eagerness are clear in every paragraph of the piece.

It all feels wrong to me, though; not what she wants to do but the way she wants to rev everything up; press agents use the same ploy, and with much the same kind of justification. Their most exhalted goal is a profile in the New York or L.A. *Times* or — still the best mark to make — a newsmagazine cover. Kael shoots much higher. She wants American filmmakers to work unconfined by the concerns of commerce. She wants to liberate the talent from the businessmen. Two matters of concern: that she's using the businessmen's tactics to help do it; and the kind of filmmakers she talks about liberating. Kael writes about and hopes for a brave, independent, vital cinema, but many of the people she expects could bring it to pass are not the ones who have taken the biggest chances. With some exceptions, Kael has repeatedly discouraged work that showed some of the greatest enterprise in American filmmaking, and more about this next time.

Jay Cocks

Jay Cocks, born in the Bronx, reviews movies for Time.

Film as Business

New trends in exhibition

As an industry, film distribution-exhibition has usually been slow to change its methods. Inbred ways have, to a great extent, become self perpetuating. It is therefore encouraging when new, experimental trends develop. It shows a willingness to move forward — particularly essential in difficult times when audience selectivity and competitive media have made the business a high risk, high casualty area.

Recent trends in exhibition reflect a new willingness to try the untried (or at least the unused) in an effort to deal with the never-ending problem. One aspect of this encouraging development is the 4-wall approach to licensing now being utilized on a major scale by some distributors.

Before turning to this, a word is in order about past practice. Ordinarily a motion picture is licensed to a theatre for a specific engagement on percentage terms. This means that the gross receipts of an engagement of a particular film are contracted to be split in accordance with an agreed percentage. The flat-price booking is the exception rather than the rule, and is usually reserved for the smaller theatre with limited potential. Within the percentage terms, however, many formulas have been applied.

For first runs in major cities the usual rule is now the 90-10 deal. In brief, this involves payment over the house "nut", or an agreed figure covering the exhibitor's cost of operation, of 90% of gross proceeds to the distributor and 10% to the exhibitor. This is not as harsh as it sounds to the exhibitor, because his house expense figure, which comes first, will generally include not only some salary but some built-in profit to boot. Assuming, for example, a $5,000 "nut" and a $15,000 gross for the week in question, there then remains $10,000 to be split $9,000 to the distributor and $1,000 to the exhibitor. Under this arrangement the distributor generally puts up either all or nearly all the advertising money to be expended, and in view of opening costs in a city like New York this will likely mean a minimum expenditure of $30,000 to $50,000. Elsewhere opening costs are lower.

The advertising burden to the distributor is rationalized on the grounds that he is establishing his film for subsequent runs, locally or nationally, as well as gambling on a big theatre take, and should therefore assume this risk. This is all very well when a film hits big, but can lead to distributor disaster when the picture winds up on its face. While the exhibitor recoups his house expense from first proceeds, all he loses are prospective profits in the form of his 10% override. The exhibitor also usually snares another bonus in the placement of advertising through his own agency, which can earn him a substantial rebate on the year's accumulation of advertising charges (newspaper line charges decline with the amount of lines bought, making the rebate an important annual credit for many exhibitors placing substantial advertising).

In addition to 90-10 there are any number of other percentage arrangements that can be developed in the exhibitor-distributor relationship. On important pictures, a flat 60 or 70 or even 80% of gross proceeds may be contracted to the distributor. The advertising might be split in accordance with the same percentages. Sometimes a distributor requires cash guaranties or guaranteed playing time. For many engagements there are sliding scale arrangements with different percentages applicable to different grosses — if a film does $5,000 gross, one percentage applies — if it exceeds that, another — usually on a rising scale to distributor (25-30-35% and up).

As previously indicated, flat licenses for fifty or a hundred dollars are rare and reserved for tail-end runs. Double bills usually involve a prime feature on percentage with a second feature flat, but there is no iron-clad rule.

On most engagements the film rental to distributor is adjusted after the run. This is known as a "look" and is a popular pastime of the trade. An unhappy, or in any event dissatisfied, exhibitor will reduce the distributor's percentage, with or without distributor's consent, and tender him a remittance in a smaller amount than called for by the contract. Just why exhibitor contracts should be so flexible, particularly when they are based on percentages, has never been made entirely clear. But this is an established way of life for many exhibitors and distributors. Distributors could by vigorous action probably eliminate it — but they don't look for litigation, fear anti-trust consequences if they act together, and are always worried about who will play their next film. Of course it should be clarified that we are not talking here about **The Godfather, The Exorcist**, or **The Sting**, or other films of vast box office appeal. Here the financial terms are firm — and in fact several exhibitor contract forms specify that they are non-negotiable. This is a contradiction in terms, of course, as a contract is supposedly a contract and binding in any event. Like a rose is a rose. But it isn't!

Then of course there are those "bidding" situations, where important films are put out for bids among exhibitors in the hope that competition will bring large proceeds. Here too the conditions are firm and the parties must abide by the

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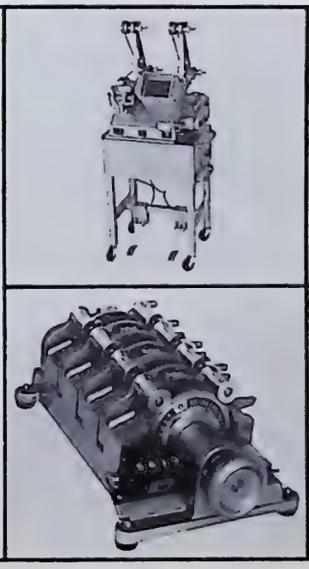

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bid terms or face howls from rejected bidders. Bidding is frequently utilized when a distributor fears anti-trust consequences from licensing a favorite customer with an important film in a competitive situation.

Yet, we have by no means exhausted the traditional formulas of film licensing. There are cash guarantees up front by the exhibitor when the occasion warrants, and minimum alternative percentages under which the distributor's share in no event must sink. There are hold-overs which require an exhibitor to continue to play a film, and guarantee the period of exhibition in any event. The blanks in the form contract leave ample room for imaginative terms of agreement.

All of these formulas and others as well can be involved when a film is "showcased" or played simultaneously in numerous theatres in an area. The same principles are involved as in the single run. The advantage lies in multiplied gross figures and relatively reduced advertising costs per theatre.

One interesting (if not unprecedented) formula is the 4-wall deal, where the distributor in effect rents the theatre with all its facilities for a specified period of time to exhibit his own picture. This has become particularly popular since the smashing success of **Billy Jack** on its re-issue runs, in addition to a number of "Nature" films which have also cashed in heavily through use of the technique. 4-walling has the great advantage of full distributor control. He rents the theatre for an agreed term and the film proceeds belong to him. (To date, 4-wall deals still seem to leave the exhibitor in control of the candy counter, which can be a substantial source of revenue in a successful engagement. So the exhibitor gets his rent with built-in profit plus a prospective override in concessions.)

In 4-walling, broad promotional techniques are utilized featuring huge advertising budgets to snare customers. To illustrate, a recent multiple-run of a "Nature" film in 110 New York Metropolitan area houses had advertising costs of nearly $650,000. Theatre rentals were reported at $265,000. On a gross of $1,100,000 this indicates a first week net to distributor of over $185,000. In a second week with advertising sharply reduced to under $120,000, even a reduced gross of $750,000 meant a higher net take to distributor.

4-walling appears to make big sense for major or important specified productions that can afford large-scale promotion in numerous multiple runs. Print costs are of course astronomical, but can be justified in this setting. But the risks in such runs, obviously, are colossal and they are by no means uniformly successful.

Of course not everyone likes 4-walling. Some exhibitors complain that it is imposed on them with big pictures while they collect minute percentages on the little ones. Many prefer the extra 10% of the 90-10 deal. Still others assert that if utilized by a major company the technique violates conditions of anti-trust decrees separating theatre ownership from distribution. Despite these objections it is apparent that many exhibitors are happy with the security of such an arrangement, and can find some solace at the candy-counter.

4-walling is important in improving distributor (and therefore producer) revenues and is not likely to be a passing fad. Its format may change — house rentals may increase — even percentages could be applied as rent — and the candy-counter revenues may not remain forever sacred to the exhibitor. But the important thing is that revenues for production and more production be increased. What we need are more pictures and better pictures. They have to be financed. Despite years of discussion and some action, exhibitor financing of production is rare. 4-walling insures prompt payment of receipts to distribution, non-negotiability of gross proceeds, full-scale promotion and advertising, and a solid opportunity for strong grosses for important films. It could prove a very valuable development.

Michael F. Mayer

Michael Mayer is a partner in the New York theatrical law firm of Mayer & Bucher. He teaches a course on Motion Picture Problems at the New School for Social Research, and has authored numerous articles and books on motion pictures, most recently The Film Industries — Practical Business/Legal Problems in Production, Distribution and Exhibition *(Hastings House).*

A Filmmaker's Column

Mutual eavesdropping

A few years ago, in a curious way, I was given the opportunity to study the home movies of some strangers. They in turn, were able to screen a roll of my home movies. How did this happen? This is the story:

I went on a little outing with my wife Diane and the former editor of the *Berkeley Barb*, Max Scheer, and his two daughters, Polly and Dove. Max only recently quit his job with the *Barb*, but what I'm telling you about took place in 1967, at the height of the *Barb*'s influence, and at the height of the hippy revolution, the cultural schism, and the great protest movement.

We headed north out of the Bay Area, toward the town of Mendocino on California's rocky coast. Not far from the town we visited some friends at a commune.

On our way home we stopped off at a lonely beach and had a picnic lunch. It was a great grey and gloomy day, with the overcast sky meeting the Pacific at the horizon. Diane took out her trusty

No doubt about it, Mr. Jones loved his Plymouth.

Leicina standard 8mm movie camera, and we took turns using it. We shot a couple of rolls of what at that time was called Dynachrome, which is now known as 3M Color Movie Film.

Max and I, no doubt clowns by nature, could not resist the possibilities offered by the soft sand, so we soon began to do pratfalls and other antics for the camera. Everybody got into the act, which kept getting out of hand as the little girls threw sand and leftover lunch at us. Just before we reached our peak, it was necessary to change film. I have that first roll, but the second is forever lost.

Two rolls of film were returned from the processor alright, but only one of them was ours. The other fifty feet of film belonged to a family that can only be called typically American. This is what I learned from looking at their film: (I must admit that some of this is surmise, for — with repeated viewings of their movies over the years — I have built an image of these people.)

The family with whom we exchanged our film I shall call the Joneses. I have never personally known anybody by that name, but I will take it as a matter of faith that it is a typical name. The Joneses lived in the foothills of the Sierras. It must have been the Fourth of July, and these patriotic people had flags wherever the camera panned or zoomed. One big flag was near the front porch of their home, which must have been in a very small town. Their front yard was enclosed within a white picket fence.

There were lots of kids in the film, and a few adults. Everybody was terrifically blond and clean-looking, with short hair naturally. No beards like mine and Max's.

I assume that Mr. Jones held the camera that day, since so much of the action revolved around a '48 grey Plymouth sitting in the driveway. No doubt about it, Mr. Jones loved his Plymouth, maybe as much as he loved the flag. But the emotional peak of the film for me, comes with the introduction of the Joneses pony. The happy little Jones kids loved their pony, and I envied them. I grew up on the streets of Brooklyn, and the only ponies I ever saw were those that accompanied street photographers.

Although Mr. Jones was an able cinematographer, in true home-movie form he failed to get any closeups of his family. Too bad, I would have loved to have seen their faces a little better.

We screened the Jones footage many times, and our friends were as delighted with the film as with any of my own carefully crafted efforts. I knew I had something there, so I blew up the found footage to 16mm and worked it into a film I was making at the time titled **LP**.

Now what could Ma and Pa Jones have

made of our film when they screened it? One possibility is that they thought we were a group of drug crazed hippy addicts toppling over each other. Lunatics in fact, who allowed their children to pelt them with garbage. Oh clumsy and bearded ragamuffins, you are destroying our native land!

Who knows, maybe the Jones family took it better than I suspect? But I feel sure that no matter what they made of this newsreel from another planet, they had a few fine evenings screening the film.

Of course the film would have taken on added importance, or perhaps even malevolance, had the Joneses known that they were looking at the editor of the notorious *Berkeley Barb* and his ace film reviewer. On a weekly basis, that underground paper was attacking the most profound American institutions, claiming corruption in the highest places, making wild claims like that the president of the United States was a criminal, or the war in Vietnam illegal.

This exchange of film is an example of a peculiar kind of communication, mutual eavesdropping, if you will. And if not eavesdropping, then certainly some other kind of dropping. But whatever it is, the communication was of interest and help to me. After all, I used the Joneses footage in my film.

Perhaps an exchange bank could be established, and people could trade their home movies. Prime mover of the underground filmmaking movement, Jonas Mekas, once suggested that home movies ought to be stored in some sort of an archive, since they are true folk art and as such represent an honest look at our culture.

Dynachrome and I have had a long-standing and mixed relationship. The local discount drug store was unloading a bunch of it in 1967, so I bought 50 rolls of outdated Dynachrome for $40 including processing. For the next few years Diane and I shot everything on Dynachrome.

One summer day, in 1971, when we were visiting our friends' farm on Vancouver Island, we decided to take an outdoor shower. It was a hot day, and it seemed the perfect thing to do. So Diane and I and our friend Nadine, and her little girl Pleasure Bell, got under the shower in the pen with the geese. A perfectly innocent moment, one which I chose to record on Dynachrome with the Leicina. My very own skin flick!

The friends who owned the farm rented out a little cabin to a young couple, and this couple decided to join us in the shower. Mind you, this was after I had started to film.

The next morning at breakfast, the young man whom I will call Earl, did what is most properly called a freak-out. How dare I film him in the nude! Didn't I know that this was evil, and that I was doing the devil's work.

So Earl, if you are so upset — and remember you walked into my film — here is the roll of film. Then Earl did a strange reversal. (Dynachrome is a reversal film.) He became, I suppose the word is haughty, and refused to take the film. I have no real explanation for his behavior, but somehow I understand it.

When the film came back from the processing lab, it was black. How come? I wish I knew. Maybe Earl's bad vibes deexposed the film.

There may be something to be learned from all of this, and then again, maybe not.

Lenny Lipton

Letter from New York

Cabbages and sex

Filmmaker George Kuchar was in town from San Francisco for a few days recently and I had the following conversation with him concerning a script he recently completed for a film called **Thundercrack**.

This is probably the longest script you've ever written. I understand it's not for yourself but for someone else.

Yes, it's for Curt McDowell who approached me in my kitchen and asked me if I would be interested in doing a screenplay for a triple-X rated movie that he was planning to make with his friend Mark Ellinger and some backers that he had found. I also thought it would be an interesting creative project, not just another film for porno houses.

I think it really has very little to do with pornography or eroticism. I've read it and it has to do with something else. It's probably one of the funniest screenplays I have ever read. The eroticism of it is simply part of the general buffoonery and has nothing to do with being erotic for its own sake. How long is it?

I estimate it will be one hour and 20 minutes.

It's very ambitious.

I went to Oklahoma and I wrote about four hours a day. It was after swimming. You see I go swimming in the morning from 11 to 12, then take a walk, and then from 1 o'clock to 4:30 I wrote.

Did you go to Oklahoma purposely to make this film or did it just happen when you got there.

I was going to Oklahoma anyway because I wanted to look at storms and clouds and stuff, and I realized I was going to be there a long period of time so I wanted to work on the project too. Last year I went and I turned out a four-page comic strip. This year my big project (so that I wouldn't crack under the strain of being alone for a month) was the screenplay.

How much of a basic plot did Curt give you to work with?

He and Mark had decided on certain things that excite them and wanted to have filmed. They figured on four men and four women in a house in the midwest and they wanted an era not too modern, because nowadays everything goes and it had to be under a more repressive atmosphere.

Were all the wild animals your idea?

Right, I had to develop tension and motivation and suspense and I thought in terms of keeping the audience in the theatre. Curt and Mark had given me those eight characters. One character had to have power over the other ones. They didn't know what kind of power so I had to invent the power. All the characters had to get together, but some should come out altered in the end.

Did you find it easier to work with this planned format ahead of time or would you rather have worked with your own ideas completely?

I like the formality of a structure ahead of time. I knew one of the husbands had to die and I thought it might be interesting if he was eaten by grasshoppers.

I noticed, when I read the whole scenario, that you kept a lot of things secret until later on in the play; like the discovery that one of the character's sons had enormously overgrown testicles and was kept locked up.

My friend Larry and I used to go through medical books and I discovered this engraving of a man with this tropical disease and I never forgot it. I decided this was it, I'll use it in the picture.

What made you decide to bring in the aspect of the circus?

For some reason, I thought of bananas and then I thought of a big gorilla. It worked out where a woman is trapped in a room, with the gorilla in the hallway, and the only way a man can get into that woman — I mean get into the room of that woman — was to throw bananas to the gorilla. I was originally afraid to bring this up for fear Curt and Mark would laugh at me, but I finally told them and they said it was a great idea. I was told that one of the characters was not supposed to be interested in people so this fitted in, maybe he could be interested in an animal.

What was your attitude when you were told to make it erotic and yet you ended up with the kind of scenario you did? You made sex slapstick.

I'm embarrassed about pictures that are

Being alone in the YMCA for a month...a lot goes through your head.

too sexy, and sex talk embarrasses me. In my personal life I could be a little bit different, but in my career as a motion picture maker I always fall back on old routines and formalities. I have built up a religious ego about myself which I'm afraid might come shattering down if I became too coarse, which in turn could lead to my destruction. So I did it my way, where the language is filled with outdated terms, not the real modern stuff, and the people have sexual hangups, like they were repressed and felt all kinds of horrors.

Do you think in a way this script is a reflection of your own hangups turned funny against yourself so you won't feel the hurt so much?

It could very well be, because being alone in the YMCA for a month... a lot goes through your head. You are alone there with those sheets of paper and a pen and your mind is working.

The dialogue is so complicated, its not really the way anybody talks; you couldn't use amateurs to perform it, you'd need professional actors who would be able to underplay and give it a cohesive style. I'm thinking of a group like The Committee in San Francisco.

Well, I met one guy in a steam room who was an actor and I suggested it to him.

It certainly wouldn't be a film for people who normally work in porno films.

Nowadays films are cut and clipped real short and fast-paced, which is okay, but I feel that if you are going to write you might as well splurge, write everything big, get it all out of your system and when you get all the actors in front of you, get it out of your system again.

I notice that there is a lot of food mentioned in the script. Everything seems related to food. What is the reason for that?

I don't know, but even when I've been writing letters lately, food has been creeping into the sentences. I would eat breakfast at 8:30 and then have no lunch, and by the time I was writing, it blended into the time I was supposed to eat. Certain parts of the body look like food. I actually wasn't that hungry while I was writing but it seemed natural that people resembled food.

Maybe it makes things less threatening for you if people are converted to bananas, cabbages and carrots.

It might be. It's also healthier.

Bob Cowan

Bob Cowan, recently married, has completed two animated short films, is trying to finish another film (Interceptions, about 30 minutes long), and is working as photographer on **Benedict Arnold** *by Walter Gutman. He has also put together a "sort of experimental free-flow comic book" — as yet unpublished.*

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References available

Nadine Covert and Esme J. Dick have compiled an annotated list of **films on alternatives** in education, lifestyles, work, religion, health and related topics. It's $2 and can be had from EFLA, 17 West 60th Street, New York 10023.

The Women's History Research Center (2325 Oak Street, Berkeley, Cal. 94708) has put together a 75-page booklet that annotates short and feature **films by and about women**. The films are grouped by category and cross-indexed by director. Distribution sources are given, as well as addresses for some of the directors. $3 apiece to individuals ($5 to institutions).

The Louisiana Society for the Arts (formerly in Lafayette, La. but recently moved to P.O. Box 401, Abita Springs, La. 70420) puts out **The Filmmakers Directory**, a listing of independent filmmakers who distribute their own products. There are descriptions of each film, a bio of the filmmaker, plus his address and phone number (included among those listed: Les Blank, Standish Lawder, Stan Vanderbeek and Carl Linder). Filmmakers pay a modest $5 listing fee (no matter how many films they have) — deadline for the December supplement, by the way, is November 16. Copies of the Directory itself are free.

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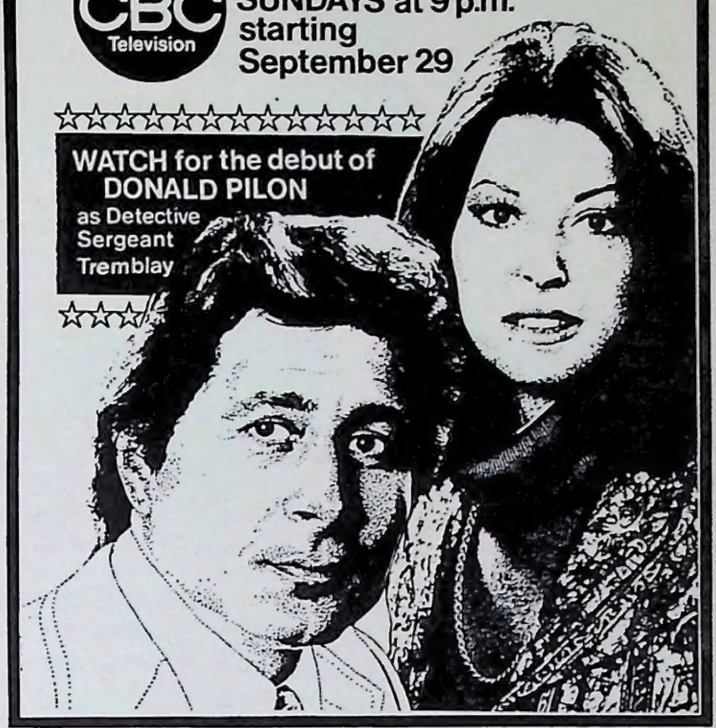

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If the suit fits

(1) Federico Fellini is being taken to court by a fellow-townswoman who claims she has been caricatured in **Amarcord**.

(2) Now let's see: Max E. Youngstein, who recently oversaw the successful re-release of **Billy Jack**, is seeking damages (of over $6 million) from the makers of that film — claiming breach of contract. Then, **Billy Jack**'s makers are suing American International Pictures over the latter firm's advertising campaign for the 1967 film **Born Losers**, claiming that the ads make **Born Losers** (in which Tom Laughlin plays a character named Billy Jack) look like a new film and a sequel to **Billy Jack**. Then, AIP is also being sued by Pressman and Williams — who made **Sisters** — for allegedly having failed to provide a complete accounting of the film's box-office performance.

(3) Similarly, Bert Schneider, Bob Rafelson and Steven Blauner are suing Columbia Pictures for royalties allegedly owed them on **Five Easy Pieces** and **Last Picture Show**.

(4) And, in Chicago, attorney Paul Bernstein took his three daughters (aged 7, 11, and 14) to see **Papillon**, but was so upset by the violence in the picture that he has now challenged the entire system that allowed the film to be classified "PG" (denoting a family adventure film). He is suing producer Allied Artists, theatre-owner General Cinema Corp., and The Motion Picture Association of America (the trade group that does the ratings).

Playing the percentages

(1) A survey in the San Fernando-Hollywood Hills area showed some 57% of the population opposed to special **subsidies** to the film industry and an almost-equal percentage in disagreement with the Supreme Court's (or anyone else's, for that matter) attempt to protect citizens from **pornography**.

(2) The Newspaper Advertising Bureau has found that 89% of prospective movie-goers rely on their **dailies** as a source of film information (46% check the movie ratings before making their choice). Of the sample tested, 28% preferred comedy movies, 19% dramas, 15% suspense films, 14% each romances and musicals, and 6% each X-rated and science-fiction films.

(3) Nearly half of all respondents to a recent Gallup Poll (46%) said that watching television was their favourite way of spending an evening. But movies and the theatre are regaining some of their former popularity: 9% of the 1974 sample gave **film or theatre-going** as their most popular evening pastime (up from 5% eight years earlier, but still well below the 17% level of a 1938 survey).

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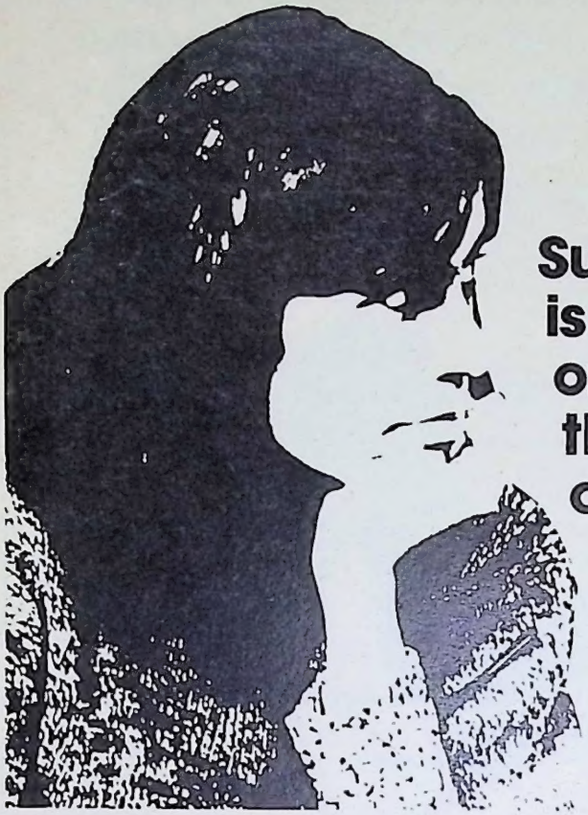
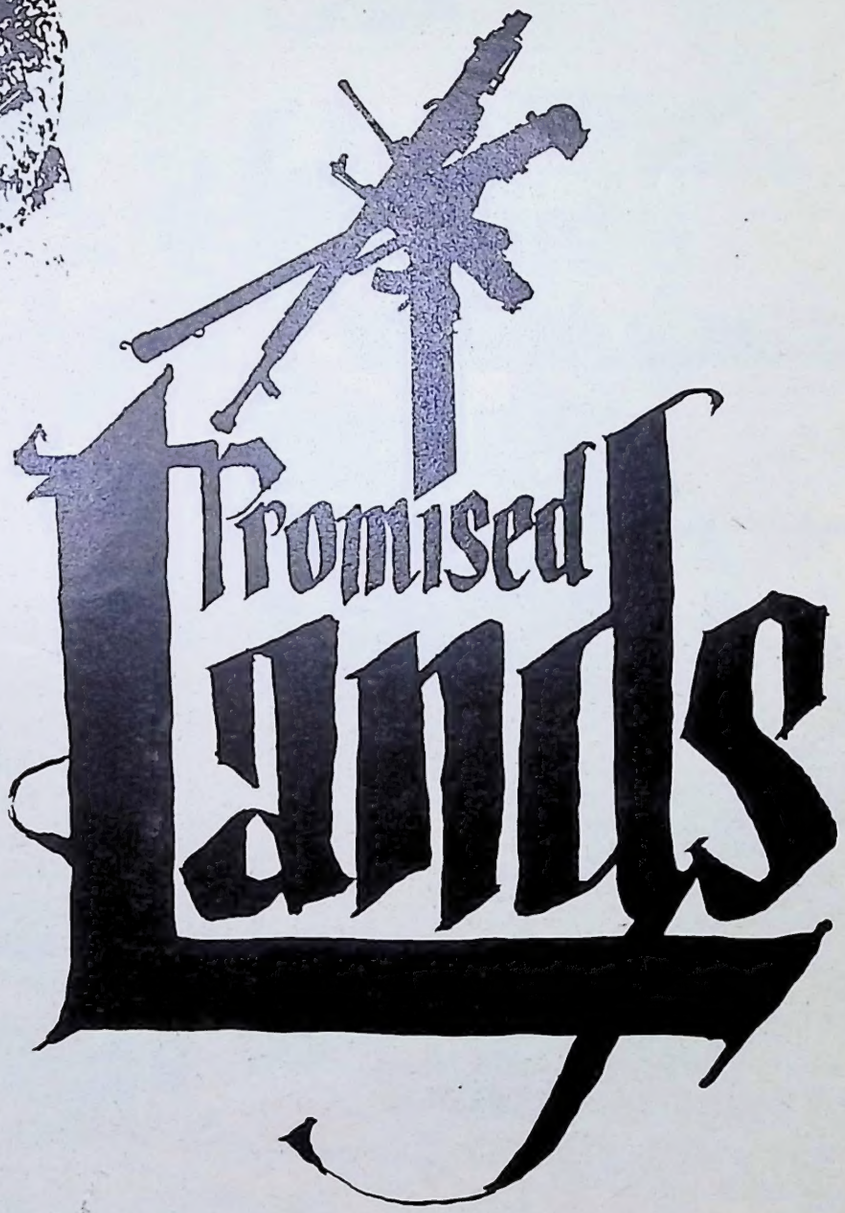


Susan Sontag's PROMISED LANDS is now available in 16MM; a film on Israel during the recent war that reflects on the human condition. Color. 87 minutes.



For bookings in schools, theatres, community and religious groups, please contact New Yorker Films, 43 West 61st Street, New York City, New York 10023 (212) CI 7-6110